

A CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE TO HOMOSEXUALITY:  
DEVELOPING AN EDUCATIONAL MODEL  
EMBRACING BIBLICAL TRUTH

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This project addresses the congregational response to homosexuality from a loving biblical perspective. The True Vine Baptist Church, located in Newport News, Virginia, serves as the context of this project. The investigator believes in training congregants to love, rather than condemn homosexuals; thereby steering the homosexual into the knowledge of biblical truth. Various instructive processes measured this educational design. A quantitative methodology was exercised to test the ministry model with questionnaires, workshops, and sermons. The findings of this research point to a series of bible based learning sessions on how congregants should view, treat, and remedy the issues surrounding homosexuality.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The writer wishes to thank God Almighty, from whom all blessings flow. Additionally, he would like to acknowledge his mentor, Dr. Alfred L. Thompson, for without his guidance, wisdom, and expertise, this project would not have been completed. The writer also wishes to express gratitude to his context group and congregation where he is pastor, the True Vine Baptist Church: thank you for your on-going support. To Sister Davina Jackson-Black, thank you for your valuable feedback and many contributions to this project. Special thanks to the writer's peer group for all of the positive reinforcement. The writer extends heartfelt gratitude to his lovely wife, Evangelist Shearline Melvin, for her unconditional love and understanding throughout this process.

## DEDICATION

To all those reading the contents of this project: it does not matter what you have done in life, be encouraged to know God is faithful and just to forgive you because He loves you. God loves all sinners, but hates all sin. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved* (John 3:16, 17).

## INTRODUCTION

American culture is shaped by the various social constructs that govern the accepted, tolerated, and taboo behaviors of our lives. The evolution of what conduct is either appropriate, or not appropriate, is determined by the opinions of those inhabitants of the public. Unfortunately, most of the worldly views that are helping to shape the changing widespread norms of our culture are infiltrating the church. One of the most popular areas of particular public concern is the issue of homosexuality.

As society is taking yet another hard look at this issue, measuring both the pros and cons of this once prohibited lifestyle; is now facing decisions across the country on whether or not to extend the institution of marriage to include individuals who embrace the homosexual way of behaving. As the world is responding to this growing issue of how to embrace, or not embrace the homosexual, the church must now take a position based upon the living Word of God.

This writer will tackle the homosexual issues facing the True Vine Baptist Church congregation. The writer presents a model of biblical education to address key areas concerning the church's response to homosexuality. According to the Random House Dictionary, the definition of education is the "act or process of imparting knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally or preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life." In an effort to engage the minds of churchgoers, the

writer achieves long lasting influential results through a variety of teaching methods. By intentionally educating the minds of congregants with biblical truth, the writer argues the church will have created a standard of righteous behaviors in response to the homosexual agenda.

In chapter one, the writer expounds upon the area of ministry this model is addressing concerning homosexuality. It also explains why the writer chose this area of ministry to explore, while identifying special insights the writer bears on the ministry. Chapter one also discusses why the local context was chosen.

Chapter two is an exhaustive compilation of what others have written on both the subject, as well as the chosen model. The writer makes several correlations with his own study as he uncovers the wealth of information that already exist on related topics of the ministry model. The writer demonstrates a specialized understanding of the different responses churches across America and beyond have taken to address homosexual concerns.

In chapter three, the writer pulls from biblical, historical, and theological research to establish a theoretical foundation of his own. The writer expounds upon both Old and New Testament scriptures; highlights relevant historical facts on the church's response to the subject; while introducing theological commentary to further aide in this in-depth study.

Chapter four discusses the testing method that the writer has chosen to use in his field experience. The writer gives several reasons for choosing his particular methodology. Chapter four also involves a detailed description concerning the writer's model design; and reiterates his hypothesis: a Christian response to the issues surrounding homosexuality is a principle that must be established in the minds of congregants, and by introducing an educational model geared toward biblical truth, a righteous, loving reaction will be achieved. The writer explains the quantitative method employed, and lays out his course of action.

In chapter five, the writer deals with the results of his field experience. He discusses what actually happened during the actual implementation of the project, the data collection methods used, as well as all data examination including: collection, analysis, and outcomes.

Chapter six contains the writer's reflections, summations, and recommendations on his project. He describes in great length the results of his findings from the field experience conducted, as well as concludes with final analysis on his ministry model. The writer restates his final project and reinforces his own theological reflections and expresses greater awareness gathered from this assignment.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

The area of ministry this model is addressing is Christian Education at the True Vine Baptist Church. This area of ministry was chosen because during the membership growth process, the writer was bombarded with a serious concern on how to address the issues of homosexuality from the perspective of laity. This concern escalated when a very involved youth leader of the church decided to change their natural appearance from a female, to a male; becoming a very bold lesbian which caused mixed outrage among the fellow congregants. The focus of this researcher is to create a ministry model that will assist the Pastor and Laity with a more productive relationship between homosexuals and heterosexuals through training sessions, discipleship workshops, and sermons with emphasis in knowing the biblical truth concerning love.

The writer of this project, Irvin D. Melvin, has learned to experience life with a spiritual perspective. The researcher, an African-American male, and the youngest of five children, grew up around God-fearing individuals who took the time to develop him in the admonishment of Jesus Christ. At the tender age of 10, the writer knew that God purposed for him to preach. There were a few mentors in the researcher's life that helped guide him in his pursuit of becoming a member of the clergy. A few of those most influential mentors include the late Reverend George N. Tyler, who was a very stern man who kept him on deeply rooted in God's Word; and the Reverend Elmore E. Warren, Jr.,

who still is an intricate part of the writer's life, as he continues to counsel and pray for him. Because of the strength acquired from his mentors, the researcher has learned to pursue wise counsel and seek after the face of God during times of uncertainty.

In 1981, the writer was called to pastor a church in Newport News, Virginia, and pastored there for 12 years, with many ups and downs. Although the church membership grew substantially and many ministries were birthed from under his leadership, The researcher still encountered some serious obstacles. It was during those times of personal struggle when the writer remembered the patriarchs of old who taught him that the church was a place of refuge and a place one could go and be healed with love. It was during those times when the researcher experienced a lack of confidence and weakness when he would be comforted at the thought of the church as place he could go when there was no other place for his broken heart to go. There he was, a new pastor, wanting only to be the best in his calling, instead the writer was undergoing the deepest pain and unrest that happened in his life while operating closely in the body of Christ.

After twelve years of pastoring, the researcher was led to leave and form a new church. The writer now serves as the pastor of the True Vine Baptist Church, located in the City of Newport News, Virginia. The City of Newport News is located in the southeastern district of the greatly historic state of Virginia. Also, the city of Newport News is one of sixteen municipalities that make up the Norfolk-Virginia Beach-Newport News Metropolitan Statistical Area. The City is in what is locally known as the Peninsula of Hampton Roads. Newport News is bordered by the County of York to the north, the City of Hampton to the east, the Hampton Roads Harbor to the south, and the James



River to the west. The city of Newport News has a long history dating back to the days of Jamestown, Virginia.

The area which is now the city of Newport News has existed under different names and forms, including: Elizabeth City, Warwick River Shire, Warwick County, Virginia, Warwick City, and the current independent city of Newport News. It is at the southwestern end of the Virginia Peninsula, on the north shore of the James River extending southeast from Skiffe's Creek along many miles of the waterfront to the river mouth at Newport News Point on the harbor of Hampton Roads.

The city of Newport News has easy access to interstate highways, airports, railways, and the Port of Hampton Roads, the second busiest cargo port on the eastern seaboard. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated the city's population rose slightly to 193,172, indicating an increase of 7.1% since the year 2000. God called the writer to shepherd His sheep in one of the most lucrative metropolitan areas in the State of Virginia. Everything the researcher had gone through in the past was preparing him to take on the challenges and triumphs at True Vine Baptist Church.

True Vine Baptist Church has a steady growth pattern, but has a majority senior attendance crowd: children and teenagers make up roughly 10%; adults ages 20-35 years another 10%; middle-aged beginning around 36-55 years make up 40%; while another 40% of the church is comprised of adults within the 56-80 age range. True Vine Baptist Church is located in the heart of Newport News city, and has multiple points of authority in regards to church polity. There is a constitution in place which was written within the confines of biblical doctrine. The administrative process is directed by an executive board. This board consists of the pastor, deacons, and trustees which adhere to a

democratic process. The governing board of True Vine conducts monthly meetings to decide on concerns that are pertinent to the stability of the church. One of the most recent improvements that True Vine Baptist Church has undergone is its half-a-million dollar renovation project with the support of a little less than 75 members. This renovation required the entire building to be gutted out and restored with a more modern contemporary feel: complete with stained glass windows and an educational facility.

True Vine Baptist Church had its beginning in 1993, when seventeen people came together to establish a church in the writer's home. In 1994, True Vine Baptist Church was blessed to begin holding services at Sanford Elementary School. Seven months later, True Vine Baptist Church moved from the school and services continued at the church's present site: 695 J. Clyde Morris Blvd. Newport News, Virginia. It was during those pivotal days, weeks, and months, when the writer, as Pastor, was able to see God's mighty hand move on the young ministry, according to His Word. The vision was to launch a church that would exemplify movement of the Holy Ghost; and lead others in Christian discipleship. As a result of the researcher's obedience to God's call, True Vine Baptist Church was experiencing church growth as the influence of a diversified worship ensued. It became evident that a productive teaching ministry needed to be activated.

Although the church continued to experience many movements of transformation and transition; there were also traditional, ritualistic services that were periodically held that displayed Godly form, but without power. These inconsistent services became perfect soil for the adversary to work. The writer began to observe more closely the behaviors of the people: it became clear to him that although the Holy Spirit moved upon the people, the people would not allow the good seed to take permanent root in their

hearts, instead the Word was short lived. Many people came seeking refuge, some salvation, but some, unfortunately, came looking to dismantle the move of God.

The challenge the writer now faces in his context is communicating divine principles to spiritual babes. This difficult task of involving various classes of people to respond to the Word of God with a receptiveness to conform to positive change is one that the researcher is very determined to solve. It is the writer's desire to develop a clear set of guidelines to help discover the resources, gifts, talents, and abilities of believers in the body to foster effective communication in relating to his context.

Because of the many experiences the researcher encountered prior to the inception of True Vine, he was more receptive to discern the evil one as well. The writer began noticing that in the midst of church growth, there were those who desired to sow seeds of discord. The elevated vision as seen through the researcher's fragmented life, has been an effective tool in the ministry, and is where the power of God rests upon him. God allows the writer to enter into a place where nothing else matters except reaching a lost and hurt soul. This passion is so very strong on the researcher, that he has devoted this entire project to the improved efforts for reaching lost souls engaged in homosexual activity, along with heterosexuals who are affected and must respond. As the writer began noticing the congregants of his church were unwilling to evangelize to homosexuals, he decided to strategize a solution with God's help.

The church is surrounded within a fertile community, ripe for evangelism, but because of the strong ethical questions that need to be addressed in that area, most believers are more willing to turn their heads hoping to ignore the problem, instead of accepting the call to preach the Gospel to save them as well. Although the worldly

perception is for people to move toward acceptance and freedom of choice, there is a standard that must be lifted stronger than an emotional quest for satisfaction. The challenge within the True Vine Baptist Church is to bridge the communication gap that continues to be an important concern within the growing diversified context.

The researcher has a saying: “When you become real with God, He will become real to you.” This signature phrase has real meaning to him as the writer literally began to be real with God in a very sincere way. The researcher wanted to be an exceptional husband, father, pastor and friend, and came to realize that his desires could only manifest if he was willing to become transparent to Jesus Christ. The writer has come to know and realize that all of the suffering, pain, and disappointments he endured were parts of his growth in order for him to learn how and when he should relate to others. As a result of the researcher’s struggles, God has afforded him the understanding to define true ministry: meeting the needs of the people at the place where they stand, at that very moment.

There was a time of healing in the writer’s ministry, a time when he came before God and cried out to Him on behalf of himself and his church, asking God to heal the wounds, mend the hearts, and deliver from addictions. Having been a wounded minister himself, the researcher is now more astute and effective, as his humility has been sharpened to recognize the condition of others, and point them into the direction of liberation.

The researcher has been pastoring for thirty years now, and there is more he wants to know about his God. The researcher has learned many things about God, the church, and the importance of salvation while on this journey. God has placed in the writer’s

spirit to bear fruit, to grow in the knowledge of the Lord, and become stronger in order to minister to others and help them endure life with patience. He is ready to nurture those who are already believers and build them up to maturity in the faith. The researcher has had many drawbacks in ministry but has also experienced many victories. He is at a place of yearning for more of God, while being spiritually mature enough to help others along their journey. What has brought the writer to this present place in his faith is his ability to recognize challenges, troubles, and life's hard lessons are purposed to make one stronger. Regardless of how many times a person must repeat a particular lesson; the most important thing to remember is to never give up.

It is with this same tenacity and determination that the researcher has purposed to tackle the challenges presently facing the True Vine Baptist Church. The writer, and all those who know him, understands that he has come too far to turn back. His walk with Christ is steady, and his consistency in the faith enables him to walk above his circumstances. The writer will be fifty-two years old this year, and he is still submitting his mind and body to Christ. It is by this same testimony that the researcher will reach those who wrestle with lustful desires and those who have decided to judge them. At this stage of his life, the researcher finds himself more in God's Word, spending time in prayer, and obeying God's call to preach to the broken hearted and teach others how to rightly divide the Word of Truth. Personally, the writer continues to endure hurt, fear, and may even cry sometimes, but his development in Christ has provided him with a security blanket of truth rooted in the Word of God. This same message of hope and trust in God is what he now focuses on to deliver to the masses of God's people who are in need of strength, beginning at True Vine Baptist Church.

A willing servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, the researcher continues to be led by the Holy Spirit as he finds strength in worship to God. What God is helping the writer to realize with each personal experience is that God allows him to go through the process of maturation, in order to help someone else be delivered, set free, and more determined to live for Him. Although salvation is free, the researcher has learned that there are some who must pay dearly for their anointing. For he, himself, has had to keep a song in his heart, not governed by his emotions at the moment, but rather, based upon his principles rooted in the Word of God. It is because of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit's continuous efforts that the writer is able to truly love God. It is his love for God that keeps him in constant prayer on behalf of others with the desire to lead them out of confusion and into clarification. As a minister of God's Word, the researcher is daily reminded that he is not at liberty to be a hindrance to anyone's path, so that his ministry will not be discredited. But rather, his life must be a light in dark places: encouraging others to grow, to endure, and to put their faith in Jesus Christ.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL**

A literary review is the focus for this chapter, as the writer specifically concentrates on analyzing learning strategies that foster spiritual growth and maturity with emphasis on Christian education. A few of the most significant and impactful outcomes derived from this ministry model are stronger, more knowledgeable disciples for Jesus Christ. Several Christian education models will be discussed, as well as related literature revealed to blend the various philosophies, program strategies, and resource curriculums for this Christian Education ministry model.

One of the most important steps to defining a Christian education ministry model is to develop a cohesive purpose or philosophy statement. On its Web site, the Ministry Tools Resource Center states: “A church needs to develop a sound philosophy for Christian education based on the Word of God. A sound philosophical statement is not enough, however, to experience the transformation of lives. What is on paper must be put into practice for it to make a difference. Too often incongruence exists between what is on paper and the actual operative philosophy of the church’s leadership.”<sup>1</sup> In a comment posted to the Christian Philosophy of Education Blog on October 22, 2009, Peter Brendoman noted:

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<sup>1</sup>Ministry Tools Resource Center, 1999-2012: *Philosophy Behind Christian Education*. <http://mintools.com/christian-education.htm> (accessed June 1, 2011).

Education is a matter of discovering what is ultimately real and learning to live in relation to it in a way that produces a life marked by meaning, freedom, and even happiness. Education presupposes truth, even in the most relativistic contexts, because teachers are concerned with correspondence between thought and reality. But from a Christian perspective, truth is not just a label applied to the successful representation of reality in thought, but comes to personify that eternal reality itself. And that personification is neither metaphorical nor abstract, but is found in the person of Jesus Christ, as he says in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”

In a similar way, a Christian teacher’s concern with the correspondence between thought and reality is not merely a concern for accurate representation, but faithful obedience. Jesus said in John 8:31-32, “if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” As Dallas Willard points out, this means that freedom comes through submitting yourself to reality. And since in the Christian confession Jesus is the truth and, as such, the ground of all reality, Christian education becomes a matter of discovering Jesus Christ and learning to live as his disciple.

Therefore, the goal of Christian education is discipleship. There is no deeper foundation for valuing lifelong learning than 2 Corinthians 3:18: “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.” We are not yet like him, but are progressively being shaped into his image, which is to say that we are engaged in a lifelong pursuit of truth. But Paul says that a veil must be removed from the face (v. 13), from the mind (v. 14), and from the heart (v. 15) for this shaping to take place, which happens “in Christ... whenever anyone trust to the Lord” (3:14-16). In other words, faith is the prerequisite for Christian education, for without faith our minds, hearts, and lives are veiled from the truth. Or, as J.P. Moreland puts it, “Faith is a power or skill to act in accordance with the nature of the Kingdom of God.” In other words, faith is not just a way to discern reality, but it also provides the ability to live effectively in relation to reality.<sup>2</sup>

The greatest challenge for most teachers of the faith is to clearly define their message in order to grow their listeners into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

Spiritual formation is more than the transfer of knowledge from a teacher to a learner. It is a process concerned with the holistic growth and development of the individual. Whereas the goal of education is learning, the goal of spiritual formation is maturity. The biblical word translated “mature, perfect, and complete” is the word *teleios*. In Matthew 5:48 we are exhorted, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” William Barclay makes the comment that “the basic meaning of *teleios* in the New Testament is always that

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<sup>2</sup>Peter Brendoman, comment on “Christian Philosophy of Education” Blog, comment posted October 22, 2009, <http://www.brendoman.com/hough/2009/10/22/christian-philosophy-of-education> (accessed June 3, 2011).



the thing or person so described fully carries out the purpose for which it was designed.”

“Formation” is the root word *morphe* from which we derive the word *metamorphosis*. It concerns not only outward change, but also a crucial development from one form to another. As scripture describes it, we are “being transformed into his likeness.” The first concern is with being. In the traditional schooling model, a pedagogical learning method is often used exclusively. This is a teacher-directed process, wherein the student is passively engaged and becomes dependent upon the instructor for learning external truths. In a formational approach, the andragogical method is also fully utilized. Learning is self-directed. The student is actively engaged in his or her own process and becomes equipped from within to grow and develop spiritually.

Spiritual formation is not “postconversion maintenance.” It is an ongoing path of developmental learning and experience. It give structure and form to the maturity process. While spiritual growth can in no way be standardized and forced, it can be given direction. As we grow physically from infancy to adulthood, there are predictable phases of learning we must go through. Spiritual formation is a dynamic process focused on developing through similar phases of growth, healing, and renewal. It guides and equips disciples toward being as well as doing. It ultimately produces an authentic maturity in Christ-the true goal of our faith.<sup>3</sup>

The goal of a Christian education ministry is to disciple others into a more loving relationship with Jesus Christ.

In order for this to be achieved, there must be an understanding of what reality is and how this reality should be compared against the Word of God. This challenge, often faced by Christian educators is their ability to connect socially constructed reality against the truth found in the Word of God.

In their work *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann maintain that reality is socially constructed. They define reality as “a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition.” The task of a sociology of knowledge is to analyze those processes by which reality is socially constructed. This task is particularly important for Christian educators to consider because education is concerned with the production and distribution of knowledge.

In the case of the Christian faith, educators intend to share a knowledge of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, and a knowledge of the Christian faith itself.

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<sup>3</sup>Michael Anthony, *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the Twenty-first Century* (Baker Academic, 2001), 91.

This is the reality they hope others will embrace as a result of their teaching. Christian educators seek to share with their students not only that which is real for them, but also that which the Christian community down through the ages has identified as real. Berger and Luckmann define knowledge as “the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics.” Christian educators seek to share knowledge that is essential for life as it is offered in the person and work of Jesus Christ. They strive to share a knowledge of God, a knowledge of God’s Word, and reality as viewed from the perspective of the Christian faith community in its various expressions.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to understand the dynamics of social reality versus spiritual reality before one is able to adequately communicate their message of Christ. For example, one person could look a glass half full, and another could look at the same glass as half empty. In short, communication is the single most essential element a Christian educator needs to grasp for real effectiveness. How a person is able to articulate the Word of God, relative to the listeners’ reality, takes on various approaches to the Bible as the teacher must discern where the listener is receiving from. Fundamental to the communication task is the comfort level of both the teacher and student.

“While ‘to teach’ can bring to mind the teacher and the formal classroom, far more is involved in the concept than this. To limit Christian education to the formal setting, as we traditionally have, is to tragically limit our idea of teaching and learning. The same point is made if we skim the range of meanings of the Bible words for “know.” One who has learned, and thus come to know, certainly will have information. But having information in no way exhausts the meaning of having knowledge.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Robert Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Baker Academic, 2008), 167.

<sup>5</sup>Lawrence O. Richards, *Christian Education: Seeking to Become Like Jesus Christ*: (Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 33.

Christian education often starts in the home with a parent as the teacher, and the child or children as the student(s). The family setting is most ideal for learning to take place, as the environment is typically loving and stable, with all of the necessary ingredients for behavioral imitation to take place.

The unique relationship between parents and children—are extended, stable, loving, varied, and transactional relationship—provides the ideal context in which the communication of revealed truth and its life impact can take place. That relationship not only enhances the impact of the parents’ modeling; it also facilitates the understanding of motives, feelings, and attitudes as well as imitation of behavior.

While all Christian education is not to take place in the home, a “family relationship” or “family feeling” is to be of concern in every teaching/learning setting. Rather than abandoning the home as the nurture center for children in favor of an imitation of school, we are to reaffirm the centrality of the home, and take seriously our task of devising educational systems which will support parents in that task.<sup>6</sup>

One of the helpful tools that Christian educators should take from the parental experience is the fact of moldable, receptive minds are needed to comprehend the biblical concepts that are being taught and shared. According to Matthew 18: 1-5, even Jesus made reference to his disciples having childlike faith: “At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: ‘truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.’”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>7</sup>*The Holy Bible: New International Version* (International Bible Society: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973, 1978, 1984).

This particular passage of scripture is a very clear indication of how a person should respond to the teachings of Christ: just as a child. Not to insult the adults who are learning, growing, and coming into the knowledge of the truth; however, this passage of scripture is an encouragement to those who are seeking after righteousness.

Receptivity to the Word of God requires a heart that has changed toward God. To deepen the writers understanding concerning the proper response to hearts that are changing; on the course to change; and those hearts that have already changed the writer considers Myles Munroe's book, *Seasons of Change: Understanding purpose in Times of Perplexity*. In Munroe's book, he asks the question: "how will you respond to change?"

Time always produces change in some form. The most inevitable aspect of life is change, and nothing in life is as constant as change. All you can do in relation to change is prepare for it, plan for it, submit to it, manage it, and adjust to it. Time ultimately brings about change, and change always requires a response. Three types of change constantly confront us: 1. Change that happens around us; 2. Change that happens to us; and 3. Change that we make happen.

Since change is inevitable, we should try to ensure that we understand and maximize the benefits of change. Just as there are three types of change, there are also three responses to change. 1. A passive response doesn't react to change; 2. An inquisitive response asks what happened but doesn't try to alter the quality or degree of change; and 3. A pro-active response makes things happen. This third response usually causes change. Pro-active people usually succeed in life—against all odds. I refer to these men and women as "world changers."<sup>8</sup>

As the above mentioned quote provides, change is an inevitable process that we all must embrace, but how we handle such processes is what the writer has decided to engage his context. Matthew 18: 1-5 presents the formula for a student's mental posture when engaging in bible study. In order for a Christian education ministry to be effective, each mind (both teacher and student) must be receptive to be real examples to be communicated for practical application.

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<sup>8</sup> Myles Munroe, *Seasons of Change: Understanding Purpose in Times of Perplexity* (Lanham, MD: Pneuma Life Publishing, 1998), 22 and 23.

Learning occurs in three formats, and hence education has three general formats. The first and perhaps most recognizable is formal educational settings such as schooling. In this setting, learning is intentional, structured, and institutionalized by a set of predetermined learning objectives and methods primarily in a classroom environment. Application is not immediate, but instruction is given to prepare the student for adult life after graduation from high school or to enter a chosen profession from college. A second form of educational setting is non-formal, such as seminars or training sessions. In this setting, learning is intentional but not necessarily institutionalized like a school. Learning has objectives, but it is typically related to the performance of a task or to a piece of content. The United States military is perhaps the most recognized provider of non-formal education. When one goes through basic training for any branch of service, the instruction is intentional and application immediate. For example, the army does not discuss the history and philosophy of grenades, but it does teach someone how to use one. However, businesses that use seminar or in-service training for employees would also employ non-formal educational formats. The third and least recognized or acknowledged setting is informal or socialization. One learns by living in and experiencing a culture or society. Learning may or may not be regarded as intentional, but it does take place. In fact, socialization is often the most life-changing learning format in any setting. A person may study a foreign culture or language in either a formal or non-formal setting—even studying the history and culture of that society. But when he actually relocates to the country speaking that language and lives in that culture, learning not only occurs but is immediately applicable.

Education in the church occurs on all three levels. For example, when an adolescent walks into the church building, sees the architecture and artistic expressions, hears the music, engages in dialogue with others, and even gets a “glare” from a parent because of her hairstyle, this is socialization. The adolescent is taught through the engagement of the congregation’s culture. When the adolescent finds her way to a Sunday school class or youth group, where a lesson is taught, this is non-formal education; intentional instruction intends to produce immediate life application. The following morning, the young lady attends a Christian high school where she experiences Christian education in a formal setting. Christian education is not restricted to any one learning environment, and all these learning environments can contribute to the spiritual growth of the individual when they are intentionally used to guide and direct someone toward Christ.<sup>9</sup>

As mentioned in the previous quote, there are several settings in which a person is able to receive instruction. One of the most difficult aspects of Christian education

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<sup>9</sup>James R. Estep, Jr. et al., *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 16-18.

ministry, however, is the ability to teach Biblical truth without diminishing the importance of other social truths.

Effective Christian education is concerned not only with what the Bible teaches but also with God's design of people. Christian educators must understand both theology and people if they are to have a productive educational ministry. Rooted in the theology of Creation, which teaches that people have worth and dignity, education that is distinctly Christian will evidence respect for God's sixth-day creation and Christian educators will attempt to understand how people learn and what motivates their behavior. It is incredibly disrespectful to assume that people are simply empty vessels to be filled with knowledge, even if that knowledge is the content of Scripture. Developmentalism provides a framework for understanding the process of educating for spiritual growth.

Christian education is concerned with teaching for spiritual growth, assuming that learning is an integral part of becoming spiritually mature. Since learning is a human phenomenon, it is incumbent upon the educator to understand how people learn. This question can be cast as purely psychological: How do people learn? It can also be cast more integratively: How has God created people to learn? By casting the question in the latter way, we are assuming that all truth is God's truth and that both the social sciences and theology are important for understanding human beings.

Taking an integrative approach to Christian education is necessary, but it is also difficult. It is necessary to develop a complete understanding of ministry, but it is difficult because of the human tendency to separate and compartmentalize truth. We must come to the place where we realize that there are larger questions than is it biblical? We must also ask, is it true?

Truth that exists outside of Scripture must be considered. For example, no one attempts to develop a biblical approach to electronics. The study of electronics is rooted in physics, which is a study of God's created order. The Christian understands that creation is orderly, and part of the divine mandate to humans is that we are to understand God's creation.

But can the same approach be taken regarding psychology? Is the study of people the same as the study of electricity? In one sense it is, because both are inquiries into God's created order. But the issue becomes confused when scientists conducting the inquiry hold presuppositions that control the way they conduct their inquiry. If, for example, the psychologist is a committed naturalist, it would be impossible for him or her ever to acknowledge that anything supernatural occurs. Every phenomenon has to be explained naturally.

The key for the Christian is first to understand the presuppositions of the scientist and, second, to integrate them properly. It is the responsibility of Christian educators to use the social sciences wisely, integrating psychology properly into their philosophy of Christian education.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 69 and 70.

As mentioned before, being able to effectively relate to the targeted audience takes an intentional effort on the part of the Christian educator in order for thorough engagement, retention, and discipleship to take place.

Within the Judeo-Christian faith tradition, discipleship concerns the process of making Christian disciples. A disciple is someone who embraces the teachings of another and assists in spreading the message of that teaching. In the Christian faith a disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ who then spreads the teachings of Christ. Making a disciple can involve teaching, sharing, motivating, and mentoring. Therefore, the discipleship function of the church comprises a fairly wide range of praxes. Discipleship can be engaged in through the preached word, formal classes, small group settings, and other forms of relational contact. Widely construed, discipleship can be viewed as Christian education.

Anthony Reddie draws on the definition offered by Jeff Astley and Colin Crowder as he begins to tease out the meaning of Christian education. They describe it as: *The phrase...often used quite generally to refer to those processes by which people learn to become Christian and to be more Christian, through learning Christian beliefs, attitudes, values, emotions and dispositions to engage in Christian actions and to be open to Christian experiences.*

This definition speaks to the comprehensive nature of Christian education. However, one must be careful not to confuse its confessional motivation with professional rationales that are associated with certain schools and institutions of higher learning. In the context of this study, discipleship and Christian education involve the teaching, exhortation, sharing and mentoring of people through various means in the church such that they become Christians, grow and mature as Christians and adopt and adhere to a Christian lifestyle.<sup>11</sup>

There are several ways of making people disciples through Christian education.

The strategies that are currently to facilitate discipleship and are used throughout several parts of the United States and abroad include: vacation bible school, bible study, Sunday school, and Sunday morning sermons. The writer will use a sermonic approach with his treatment process in order to utilize various aspects the Christian education methods.

Phillips Brooks, in his book: *The Joy of Preaching*, expounds upon the importance of bridging the communication gap between Biblical history and modern-day application.

Brooks writes:

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<sup>11</sup>Robert London Smith, Jr., *From Strength to Strength: Shaping a Black Practical Theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2007), 152.

And then another result of this conception of preaching as the telling of a message is that it puts us into right relations with all historic Christianity. The message never can be told as if we were the first to tell it. It is the same message which the church has told in all the ages. He who tells it today is backed by all the multitude who have told it in the past. He is companied by all those who are telling it now. The message is his witness; but a part of the assurance with which he has received it, comes from the fact of its being the identical message which has come down from the beginning.

Men find on both sides how difficult it is to preserve the true poise and proportion between the corporate and the individual conceptions of the Christian Life. But all will own today the need of both. The identity of the church in all times consists in the identity of the message which she has always had to carry from her Lord to men. All outward utterance of the perpetual identity of the church are valuable only as they assert this real identity. There is the real meaning of the perpetuation of old ceremonies, the use of ancient liturgies, and the clinging to what seem to be apostolic types of government.

The heretic in all times has been not the errorist as such, but the self-willed man, whether his judgments were right or wrong. "A man may be a heretic in the truth," say Milton. He is the man who, taking his ideas not as a message from God, but as his own discoveries, has cut himself off from the message-hearting church of all the ages. I am sure that the more fully you come to count your preaching the telling of a message, the more valuable the real the church will become to you, the more true will seem to you your brotherhood with all messengers of that same message in all strange dresses and in all strange tongues.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to preaching, as a viable method of Christian education, the small group setting is also very effective. Among these very popular Christian education methods, another noteworthy technique is a cell group. According to Dr. George McCalep Jr.'s book, *Faithful Over A Few Things*:

Cell groups are even smaller than the congregational groups. Cell groups should under no circumstance have more than twelve members; otherwise the main purpose is defeated by the numbers. Cell groups may be conducted in a variety of ways, but the main agenda is relationship building. The key word is love. The purpose is to fulfill the often overlooked or underemphasized portion of The Great Commission, "teach them to observe all things" (Matt. 28:20). The specific objective is the fulfillment of that portion of the greatest commandment to "love one another, as I have loved you," (John 13:34). Larry R. Chards, a leading advocate of small groups, defines the cell as "eight to twelve believers

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<sup>12</sup>Phillips Brooks, *The Joy of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989), 33 and 34.



gathered to minister to each other to grow in their sensed love and unity, and to encourage one another to full commitment to Christ.”

Effective small cell group ministry probably represents the most untapped potential for church growth among traditional mainline churches.<sup>13</sup>

Although each of these strategies are very helpful and present a different style of learning and comprehension, there must be an element of relationship that is fostered as well. The bible helps us in Luke 14:26: *If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.*<sup>14</sup>

Jesus used strange language to describe the priority of a relationship with Him. Identifying the most intimate of human relationships, He told would-be followers they must hate those people if they were to be His disciples. What did Jesus mean by that? It would be inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture if Jesus meant for His followers to despise their families. Jesus used the word hate to indicate a lesser degree of devotion. Disciples of Jesus must love Him more than they love any other person, including their immediate families. Disciples’ love must be a passionate love that reveals itself in daily life. It is the kind of love that enables disciples to meet the other requirements of following Jesus.

How do we grow in our love for Christ so that it becomes passionate? That type of love is born from time spent together. Jesus modeled for us the intimacy He had with the Father while on earth by making time to be alone with Him. His days were full; yet time with His Father was the focal point of His life each day. For us, it means that our daily schedules will be centered on both planned and spontaneous times of prayer, meditation, and Bible study.

Time with God results in changed thinking and changed behavior. Jesus said His disciples were to be salt and light. Salt and light make a difference when they are applied. Disciples of Jesus are to be distinctive in the way they live. When circumstances are in their worst, Christians ought to be at their best. There is no substitute for time intentionally spent with Jesus to develop intimacy with Him as well as passion for Him.<sup>15</sup>

When considering the best method to provide discipleship training through

Christian education to achieve a deeper, more personal relationship with Jesus

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<sup>13</sup>Dr. George O. McCalep, Jr., *Faithful Over A Few Things: Seven Critical Church Growth Principles* (Lithonia, GA: Orman Press, 1996), 105.

<sup>14</sup> NIV, Luke 14:26.

<sup>15</sup>John G. Johnston, *Discipleship: Stepping-Stones to Developing Your Church’s Strategy* (Nashville: LifeWay Christian Resources, 2009), 6-7.

Christ, the options are limitless. As the previous quote mentions, there should be spontaneous times spent with God aside from the traditionally planned times scheduled for meditation, prayer, and bible study. One of the most popular ways to achieve spontaneous evangelism is through smaller, more intimate group settings. Parallel with this thought is the fact that Jesus taught large groups of people, but is coined to have had only 12 disciples. Home based bible studies and discipleship trainings may also be considered among the variety of Christian educational models. “The people of transformational churches actively connect people to one another through ministry systems such as home Bible studies, small groups, Sunday school, and service groups. Both believers and nonbelievers were encouraged to engage actively in community with one another. Though these churches held a sure view that God alone can transform a person, they have learned that it often occurs in the atmosphere of a small group of friends.”<sup>16</sup>

Even though the smaller group setting has its advantages for those seeking a closer walk with Christ, the evangelistic mandate should not be overlooked. The cross between discipleship through Christian education and evangelism is a very critical distinction that the writer needs to make as the writer attempts to teach the congregant to reach the homosexual in this project.

Evangelism is proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to the lost. The “lost” are those people who do not believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They are like lost sheep, which a good shepherd seeks and brings to safety (Matt. 18:12). The goal of evangelism is to win converts. A convert is one who becomes a believer in Christ; he is converted from being a non-believer to being a believer.

A disciple is a convert who adheres to the basics of the Christian faith. The word “disciple” means “a pupil, someone who learns by following.” Such knowledge is more than head knowledge—it is also “heart-knowledge.” True

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<sup>16</sup> Ed Stetzer and Tom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 37.

disciples not only know about Christ, they also follow the teaching of Christ. In Christian theology, discipleship is the process of training individuals to become mature disciples. Discipleship is more than just sharing information—it involves developing individuals to love and obey God.

Evangelism and discipleship are linked together. Evangelism results in converts and converts are trained to become disciples. Disciples evangelize to reach more converts, who are trained to become disciples. Disciples evangelize to reach more converts, who are trained to become disciples. So evangelism leads to disciples and disciples evangelize until the Gospel is spread throughout the world.

Whenever possible, discipleship should follow evangelism. Evangelism results in people being spiritually reborn (see John 3:3), so new converts are “spiritual babies.” Converts need discipleship in order to grow to maturity. It is not right to create a physical baby and then abandon it. In the same way, it is not right to create a spiritual baby and then abandon it. Converts need to be trained by other Christians.

Consider the relationship of evangelism and discipleship with missions. Christian missions involve proclaiming the Gospel across cultures. So a missionary spreads the Gospel to a people group or culture different from his own. Evangelism and discipleship are the processes by which mission work is accomplished. Evangelism and discipleship also occur within one’s own culture, so not all evangelism and discipleship falls within the context of missions.<sup>17</sup>

By intentionally involving both disciplines, discipleship and evangelism, the writer hopes to bring a fresh awareness to his congregants and those practicing homosexuality to the love and grace of God.

According to Roy T. Edgemon’s *Equipping Disciples Through Church Training*, he expounds the subject of learning, focusing his guide to what and how a group learns. “*How* a group studies is almost as important as *what* it studies. Good resources are virtually useless unless they are used in a constructive way. Meaningful group study ought to encourage participants to learn and should help them feel good while

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<sup>17</sup> Missions Training, 2006-2012: *Evangelism and Discipleship: Know the relationship between evangelism and discipleship*, <http://missionstraining.org/Evangelism/Relationship.html> (accessed March 13, 2011).

participating in the learning experience. This rarely happens without careful and consistent planning, which is the responsibility of the study leader.”<sup>18</sup>

The writer focuses his ministry model under the auspices of Christian education, as he intentionally undergirds this project with evangelistic styled discipleship training. One of the most central aspect of training is a repetitious involvement. According to Charles Foster:

The repetition of an action until its accomplishment achieves a high standard of performance is a critical component of learning. We recognize the importance of practice in sports and music. If we are parents of children we have watched them rehearse a musical scale, repeat attempts to throw the ball through a hoop, or decrease the time it takes to run from one place to another. Unfortunately little attention is given to the importance of practice in the church's education.

We do not read without practice. We cannot pray, sing hymns, or recite creeds if we have not practiced them. We do not recognize the pain in others if we have not practiced care for others. We do not know how to give leadership to a group if we have not practiced a multitude of relational and organizational skills. We do not know how to participate in transformational ministries of love and justice if we have not practiced the risks of being faithful in those places where people are hurting.

Practice is central to the habits, attitudes, and sensibilities that become second nature to people who live in a community seeking to incarnate the wisdom and compassion of Christ. Practice is critical to the kind of thing that discerns the creativity and justice of God in the routines of daily life. Practice is essential to the vitality of congregational worship and practice increases the effectiveness of our service to others. Practice, indeed, should consume a significant amount of the educational attention of congregations. The need for practice is especially critical to the survival of communities of faith at a time in history when we are surrounded by many options for our commitments and we experience intense pressure to approach those commitments in much the same fashion as we choose a box of cereal from the grocery shelf. Lack of practice contributes to superficial faith and mission. It limits the freedom that can be achieved only through repeated practice. This is an insight most children discover at a fairly young age.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Roy T. Edgemon, *Equipping Disciples Through Church Training: An administrative guide for Church Training general officers and adults and for leaders of youth, children, and preschoolers* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1981), 62.

<sup>19</sup>Charles R. Foster, *Educating Congregations: The Future of Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon press, 1994), 75 and 76.

This model seeks to introduce, to some, and reintegrate, to others, the importance of God's sanctification and justification processes for the believer. There are several resources from which the writer has chosen to incorporate into this project. All of the journals, books, scholarly articles, and on-line web resources have helped to adequately inform the writer of the many schools of Christian thought surrounding this subject of homosexuality in the church.

Irving Bieber, in his book, *Homosexuality: a psychoanalytic study*,<sup>20</sup> the author captures observations from his study and concludes that past experiences have direct correlation to homosexual attraction. The research done in this book has made significant strides in the psychology of homosexual behaviors. This book details the empirical research conducted on both heterosexual and homosexual men from the same age group: analyzing their varied backgrounds, parental experiences, and their responses to love and relationships.

Alan Chambers, in his book: *Leaving Homosexuality: A Practical Guide for Men and Women Looking for a Way Out*,<sup>21</sup> writes a compelling invitation to homosexuals to receive rest from their sexual additions through Jesus Christ and His loving kindness. Chambers outlines, for the homosexual readers, a process for freedom from thinking that a person who has already indulged with the same-sex is now and forever limited from choices beyond their initial decision to act on the forbidden urge. He discloses to his readers the power of choice and the limitations that some choices has on an individual. Chambers also lifts the notion that an attraction does not have to define a person's

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<sup>20</sup>Irving Bieber, *Homosexuality: a psychoanalytic study* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc.), 1988.

<sup>21</sup>Alan Chambers, *Leaving Homosexuality: A Practical Guide for Men and Women Looking for a Way Out* (Oregon: Harvest House Publishers), 2009.

identity, but rather, sexual attractions must be kept in a subordinate position in a person's life.

Joe Dallas, in his book, *When Homosexuality Hits Home: What to Do When a Loved One Says They're Gay*,<sup>22</sup> gives rise to the ambiguities of sex, while detailing the various traps that the enemy sets to confuse the very elect, especially our young people. This how-to book for the Christian helps to outline the dos and don'ts of loving interactions with family members who struggle with their sexuality.

Authors Earle F. Fox and David W. Virtue, in their book, *Homosexuality: Good and Right in the Eyes of God?*,<sup>23</sup> seek to answer the question: is homosexuality an identity, or a behavior? The authors present a dialogue concerning homosexual sin within the confines of: creation; the fall; and redemption. These three essential elements of the Christian belief system is what helps to support the writers as they aid the Christian faced with understanding the biblical position of this growing socially accepted trend.

To facilitate an alternative debate, Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse in their book, *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate*,<sup>24</sup> seeks to lift two methods of thought: the scientific and the biblical. The authors examine the measurable elements of homosexual reality through scientific study, while investigating the scriptures for moral truth. The conclusion of this book presents an interesting claim of disconnected realities: convincing its readers of science and theology

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<sup>22</sup>Joe Dallas, *When Homosexuality Hits Home: What to Do When a Loved One Says They're Gay* (Oregon: Harvest House Publishers), 2004.

<sup>23</sup>Earle F. Fox and David W. Virtue, *Homosexuality: Good and Right in the Eyes of God?* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Alexandria: Emmaus Ministries), 2003.

<sup>24</sup>Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate* (Wisconsin: InterVarsity Press), 2000.

being very distinct and with no overlapping elements that would convince the Christian to embrace homosexual behaviors as moral. This book helps the writer to understand the alternative view from other followers of Jesus who believe homosexuality is a moral conduct with no divine consequence. The writer vehemently disagrees with this particular author with a more literal interpretation of the Bible concerning homosexuality.

K.L. Kerber writes a great resource that explores the awesome effects of communication from the female perspective in *Wallace E. Lambert's Psychology of Language Learning*.<sup>25</sup> The author blends together an argument that society would be a better united place if we were able to read, interpret, and speak the same, or similar, language. Learning the respective language of women, the author lifts, involves a psychological observation of dependency, along with experiences, and the knowledge of what motivates them into action. This particular reference was helpful to this project as the writer was able to gather more knowledge concerning communication in relation to women, and how effective use of this engaging method will result in retention for the receiver.

Mike Mazzalonga, in his book *Gay Rights Or Wrongs: A Christian's Guide to Homosexual Issues and Ministry*,<sup>26</sup> explores the ancient Egyptian homosexual behaviors being linked to a cultic and spiritualist ritual. Because of these historical implications, the authors present a layered argument that homosexuality has more to do with a spiritual (evil) experience, rather than a mere act leading to a habitual, compulsive lifestyle. The

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<sup>25</sup>K.L. Kerber, *Wallace E. Lambert's Psychology of Language Learning*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House), 2002.

<sup>26</sup>Mike Mazzalonga, *Gay Rights Or Wrongs: A Christian's Guide to Homosexual Issues and Ministry* (Missouri: College Press Publishing Company), 1995.

contributors to this book disclose information from the spiritual and secular perspectives. This brilliant work has contributed to the writer's project by pointing to the historical and theological significance of homosexuality as an immoral spirit-led operation, rather than a mere brazen activity.

Elizabeth Moberly explores homosexuality as a condition resulting from challenges experienced in a person's childhood in her book, *Homosexuality: a new Christian Ethic*.<sup>27</sup> Although this publication evaluates the parental role in the homosexual's past, it does not, however, allocate sole responsibility to the parent(s). This book is helpful to the writer as the author analyzes the homosexual's psychological needs, and explores the absence of fulfillment thereof.

In *Homosexuality and Christian Community*,<sup>28</sup> Seow captures the thoughtful debate within the Christian community: the bible as the guide to an uncompromised faith, where the church must defend the position of a righteous, called-out, covenant people; versus the equally persuasive belief of inclusive grace to accept the marginalized (homosexual) with a passion concerning those who do not fit the social standard of "appropriateness."

A chronicle of scholarly articles including: human anatomy and physiology; sexual behaviors, practices, disorders, and diseases; health, education, and medicine; relationships; legal issues; and social and cultural perspectives was written in the *Sex and*

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<sup>27</sup>Elizabeth Moberly, *Homosexuality: a new Christian Ethic* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co.), 1983.

<sup>28</sup>Choon-Leong Seow, *Homosexuality and Christian Community* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 1996.



*Society, Volume 1* book<sup>29</sup>. This book serves as a resource guide to the writer as he seeks advanced explanation on the subject of sex: its cultural implications and taboos.

Siker does a great job of compiling a variety of essays to leadership from the faith community in *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate*<sup>30</sup>. In this diary of revelatory articles, each contributing author presents fascinating points of views as they each lift scripture in a unique way that encourages constructive dialogue where the topic of homosexuality is met with theology and biblical interpretation. The writer is aided in this scholarly debate as he fashions his Christian educational model with theory gathered from this material.

Lee Alexander Stone's book, *It Is Sex O'clock*<sup>31</sup>, argues that each generation possesses a sexual fearlessness from the generation before. That each generation redefines sex and questions the sacred traditions from the generations from before. The author explores the church's role in antagonism, which pushes many frustrated youth into a natural curiosity to explore forbidden areas of sexual pleasure. Stone's work helps the writer better determine the processes necessary for congregational engagement with homosexuals.

William Thomas' book, *Sex and Society; Studies in the Social Psychology of Sex*<sup>32</sup>, outlines the historical implications of sexual evolution in our society: how different

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<sup>29</sup> *Sex and Society, Volume 1* (New York: Marshall Cavendish Reference), 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Siker, Jeffrey, *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 1994.

<sup>31</sup> Lee Alexander Stone, *It Is Sex O'clock* (Chicago: Kessinger Publishing), 2005.

<sup>32</sup> William Thomas, *Sex and Society; Studies in the Social Psychology of Sex*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: The Gorham Press), 1907.

ethnic, religious, and age groups view the sexes. Information gathered from this resource is most relevant to the historical context of my study as it gives several examples of ancient rituals, rules, customs, and traditions that point to an ever evolving interpretation of sex, as society continues to redefine it.

Wink captures the revelatory messages from several twenty-first century prophets in his book, *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches*<sup>33</sup>. This work includes various perspectives from twenty credible persons strategically positioned within the faith leadership community. Chronicled are their differing views concerning the Christian response, or lack thereof, with respect to the very contentious issue of homosexuality. Each contributing author gives a biblical perspective of homosexuality as a sin-dilemma that must be treated as such.

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<sup>33</sup>Wink, Walter, *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress), 1999.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

The writers proposed explanation on the church's response to homosexuality is to produce a process for biblical education in an effort to engage the minds of churchgoers; the writer mirrors evangelistic disciples through a variety of teaching methods. By intentionally educating the minds of congregants with biblical truth, the writer argues the church will have created a standard of righteous behaviors in response to the homosexual agenda.

To address the key areas affecting both the True Vine Baptist Church context, along with the homosexual community, the writer comprehensively discusses the biblical, historical, and theoretical implications surrounding this project. In order to render a consistent method of Bible interpretation concerning homosexuality, the writer will also present an Old and New Testament Biblical model to produce a larger framework of explanation pertaining to sexual immorality.

#### **Biblical Foundation**

The Biblical premise of the writer's thesis is to develop a ministry model that honors God, as well as enlightens the people of God. This chapter addresses issues of sexuality with clarity, with a proactive approach to saving souls lost to homosexuality; while creating a model to alter the response to such behaviors for a more productive society of believers within the body of Christ. According to Tiffany and Ringe's Biblical Interpretation, "it is important to be up-front about our assumptions underlying this

particular roadmap of biblical interpretation. First among them is the recognition that the Bible is a collection of documents written by human authors for specific human communities struggling to understand and express their own identity in relationship with each other and with God. That means that these documents are historically and culturally relative, and we must respect the specific social institutions and world views that underlie them.”<sup>1</sup>

The objective is to create a method for believers and non-believers alike, that will bridge the gap in ministry for those who have, or are currently, involved with homosexuality, and clearly defining the role of the believer throughout this process. This thesis is shaped by the Old Testament Story of Sodom and Gomorrah which is found in Genesis 13: “The next moment of suspense came with strife between the herdsmen of Abraham and those of Lot made it necessary for the two relatives to part and go their respective ways. Lot, the ancestor of Moab and Ammon (see Gen. 19:30-38), was given the freedom to choose where to go, and the future of Israel hung in the balance of his decision. Providentially, Lot chose, not the Land of the Promise, but the area of the Jordan Valley, whose wicked cities—Sodom and Gomorrah—Yahweh later destroyed by volcanic fire and brimstone (13:3-13).”<sup>2</sup>

The Sodom and Gomorrah story is coined for the homosexual reference to God’s sharp disdain for such behaviors. Not only does this story validate God’s position on homosexual behaviors by sending fire to destroy the cities; but also, does this story bring

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick C. Tiffany and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 14.

<sup>2</sup>Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament: Fourth Edition* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 173.

to light the believer's part in this situation: to consult God (as did Abraham), praying for mercy and pleading for the souls of them that they would not be lost.

The following assessment will explore the various perspectives in which to analyze the cities, its wickedness, and how Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family were saved. One of the ways to determine whether or not there were specific ramifications for homosexual acts resulting in the destruction of the cities is to also investigate the behavior of Sodom and Gomorrah's men toward the angels who visited Lot before their execution of heaven's orders. The cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, have played a pivotal role in the minds of all Old Testament Bible readers, as God reveals Himself in another light: a holy, vengeful, yet intolerant of immoral behaviors authority. Genesis 6:5 also gives credence to a sad yet vengeful God, even before the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were condemned: "The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the LORD said, 'I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.' But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD."<sup>3</sup>

According to the Nelson's *King James Study Bible*, the *Anthropopathism*, the human emotion applied to God, is what took place during the days of Noah: where God was sorrowful that He ever made man. Noah's story gives Bible readers insight on the evil that God refused to tolerate even before the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah where

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<sup>3</sup>NIV, Genesis 6:5.

chronicled.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that these two stories: the story during the time of Noah and the story during the time of Lot in Sodom, are similar in that God was relentless in his effort to stop the wickedness he saw, and decided to destroy all of those who were not worthy of His grace. As a result of the wickedness experienced in Noah's day, there was only eight persons saved from destruction by water; and likewise, as a result of wickedness experienced in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, there was only Lot's family who were saved from fire and brimstone poured down from Heaven.

The two cities are notorious for housing corruption and the sinful like. According to Colin Brown, "the cities Sodom and Gomorrah are biblical examples of heathen cities on which judgment fell. There is a certain deliberate paradox in these cities in that these places were notorious centers of wickedness in the Old Testament".<sup>5</sup> These cities are situated along the Jordan River plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, along with three other cities (many historians argue on how many cities there were to make up the cities of the plain), made up the southern region of the land of Canaan (present day Israel). Each of the cities was known for wickedness, and was at liberty concerning its impurity and corruption. In Ezekiel 16:48-50: God compares Jerusalem to Sodom, saying "Sodom never did what you and your daughters have done." He explains that the sin of Sodom was that "She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me." According to Jim Cornwell's book: *The Kings of Canaan*,<sup>6</sup> he conducts an in-depth study concerning the

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<sup>4</sup>*The King James Study Bible*. Liberty University (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 1988.

<sup>5</sup>Colin Brown, *Dictionary of New Testament Theology Volume 2*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing house, 1981), 767.

<sup>6</sup>Jim Cornwell, "The Kings of Canaan," *The Alpha and the Omega* (1995): 461-468.

Cities of the Plain, and describes the following ancient cities that not only formed alliances, but four of the five cities were also consumed by fire during God's wrath captured in Genesis 14: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela. Additionally, Cornwell suggests that of all of the previously mentioned cities, Sodom was the major metropolis, as it was the chief settlement.

To this day, there are traces of the once affluent city of Sodom, and its ruins are covered in white ash. Isaac Taylor quotes Flavius Josephus, the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish historian who stated: "there are still the remainders of that divine fire; and the traces of the five cities are still to be seen..." from his book, *Wars of the Jews*, Book IV, chapter VIII.<sup>7</sup> The traces of the past existence of the five cities may be currently found with round balls of brimstone, or nearly pure sulfur that is located near the Dead Sea. Ron Wyatt<sup>8</sup> was the first archeologist who discovered the cities existence: he was able to uncover several samples of brimstone balls (in raindrop formations), along with sulfur deposits.

Prior to the written story of Sodom and Gomorrah, the homosexual practice was viewed to the Israelite people as pagan, wicked, and immoral. There are several instances where the Old Testament makes reference to the sexual immoral practices of the heathens: those persons who did not acknowledge Jehovah as the true and living God, but rather, worshiped other false gods. Such people (gentiles) were considered unclean and void of righteousness. These heathens were among those who made sacrifices to idols and engaged in sexual behaviors opposing the natural order of God's creation. It is

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<sup>7</sup>Isaac Taylor, *The Jewish War of Flavius Josephus: A New Translation Volume II* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, Paternoster Row, 1851), 93.

<sup>8</sup>John Barton and Julia Bowden, *The Original Story: God, Israel, and the World* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 173.

because of, but not limited to, these activities that caused God's wrath to ignite and demolish the city without remorse.

Upon the acquired, collective wealth of Abraham (our father of faith) and Lot (his nephew), the unity between them was becoming burdensome. In order to circumvent any ill-feelings, there was a unanimous decision for the two of them to part ways and sojourn different from each other. Even though there were several reasons for their departure, it only took one cause for the two of them to unite again. They (Abraham and Lot) were united again due to there being a shift in focus from God himself. He heard the cry from the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and its wickedness. The scripture speaks of God's unwavering sentiments concerning the wickedness that continued to provoke His anger, without repentance.

The wickedness that the scripture alludes to includes, but is not limited to the homosexual behaviors that the men were participating in. The notion that all of the men in Sodom and Gomorrah were homosexual is questionable, due to the fact that Lot's daughters were promised to be married to men in the city. However, the text does suggest not only were there large portions of the male population openly gay, but it also points to there being a strong bisexual influence, as Lot offered his daughters to the men who were wanting to sleep with the Angels who visited him. The most important part to consider here is the forceful, uncontrolled sexual desires displayed by the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, leading to their blatant disrespect and violent reaction to any who opposed the fulfillment of their selfish, unconstrained sexual pleasures. According to the Broadman Bible Commentary:

Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom where the men congregated. He alone ran to greet the strangers and offer them the hospitality of his home. At first they



bluntly refused, for they had not come on a social visit, as with Abraham. Upon his further insistence they accepted. At first glance Lot's suggestion that they leave at dawn seems a lack of proper regard for their companionship, but it stemmed from his knowledge of the city. It would be in the interest of their own welfare for them to leave Sodom as soon as possible.

The request of the men of Sodom that they *know* the visitors was probably a demand for homosexual activities. Thus the term "sodomy" found its origin. Indeed the city was as evil as the "outcry" had indicated. Lot, with further impulsiveness, went outside his door, closing the door behind him to protect his guests, and boldly tried to reason with the mob. He even offered his daughters to them. His suggestion is repulsive to the modern, but for Lot it was the ultimate act of hospitality. His duty was to protect his guests at all costs. The offer of his daughters, however, was too easily made and perhaps influenced their own lack of respect for him when they were later left in the cave with him.

The reaction of the crowd was to make threats against Lot's own person. They had drifted too deeply into their perversions to be turned aside by the offer of the two girls. Only the intervention of the angels saved Lot. The men outside were struck with a temporary sort of blindness (2 Kings 6:18), and Lot's futile attempt at heroics resulted in his being protected by his guests! Now he knew that his guests were no mortal men.<sup>9</sup>

The sexual urges of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were so offensive that the Angels had to physically protect Lot from the growing mob and blind the eyes of the anxious crowd so that they would not find the door to Lot's house and invade his privacy.

There was no repentance in sight for the city and its evildoers, and the cities were collective in their behaviors, and dishonored God and themselves. Even after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, there were documented sexual behaviors to creep into the cultural settings, so much so, that the book of Leviticus renders guidelines with regard to these types of behaviors: "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them".<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Clifton J. Allen, *The Broadman Bible Commentary: Volume 1 Revised General Articles Genesis-Exodus* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1973), 177.

<sup>10</sup>NIV, Leviticus 20:13.

For centuries, biblical commentators have interpreted the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as a demonstration of God's wrath toward homosexuality. Yet later biblical references to Sodom do not even mention homosexuality; they suggest that the city was destroyed because of its inhospitality to guests. Well known author John McNeill argues:

Throughout the Old Testament Sodom is referred to as a symbol of utter destruction occasioned by sins of such magnitude as to merit exemplary punishment. However, nowhere in the Old Testament is that sin identified explicitly with homosexual behavior. In Ezekiel 16:49-50, for example, we read: "behold, this was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughter lived in pride, plenty, and thoughtlessness; they supported not the poor and needy; they grew haughty, and committed abomination before me; so I swept them away, as you have seen." Isaiah stresses lack of justice, Jeremiah cites moral and ethical laxity. The Deuterocanonical books usually identify the sin as one of pride and inhospitality. Wisdom (19:13-14), for example, clearly identifies the sin as one of inhospitality: "whereas the men of Sodom received not the strangers when they came among them; the Egyptians made slaves of the guests who were their benefactors." Ecclesiasticus (16:8) in turn identifies the sin as pride: "He did not spare the people among whom Lot was living, whom he detested for their pride." Only the late New Testament books, 2 Peter and Jude, find the sin of Sodom connected in any way with sexual practices; but these books seem to understand the sin as a "transgression of orders" between human and angelic beings.

A further confirmation that in biblical times the sin of Sodom was not connected with homosexual practices as such is to be found in the fact that none of the biblical passages, either in the Old or New Testament, traditionally understood as condemning these practices make any mention of the Sodom story. Yet such a reference would have been obvious if the sin of Sodom was understood as involving these practices.<sup>11</sup>

To counter McNeill's argument, David Greenberg, author of *The Construction of Homosexuality*, acknowledges the claim that some scholars believe inhospitality to be the reason for Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction. However, in his book, Greenberg takes an even deeper look into the immoral activities the two cities participated in. Greenberg writes:

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<sup>11</sup> John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 46.

Since the angels were sent to Sodom and Gomorrah because of the inhabitants' great (and unspecified) wickedness, it is not clear that inhospitality was the sole complaint. Yet even if homosexuality was involved, it was not consensual homosexuality but homosexual rape. Sexual aggression against strangers was not necessarily forbidden, but to threaten a guest with rape was a particularly outrageous violation of hospitality norms. In a world without Hilton chains, hospitality to travelers was enjoined by all ancient moral codes.<sup>12</sup>

Greenberg brings awareness to a very disturbing, yet paramount perspective concerning the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah: sexual aggression leading to rape. This pivotal point is vital to the ministry model of the writer's thesis. According to authors Stephan Hurwitz and Karl O. Christiansen in their book, *Criminology*, they examine the root of various heinous crimes that are committed and focus in on the monstrous offense of rape:

Hyposexuality, which is usually of psychogenic origin, may in rare cases lead to rape. It often seems to be accompanied by exaggerated shyness and timidity, which restricts opportunities for contact with women. The resulting accumulation of drive may sometimes be released in violent sexual assaults. Various displacement reactions may take place, of which, *inter alia*, indecency towards children is of criminological interest.

Homosexuals constitute the majority of those persons deviating as regards the object of the drive. There is much controversy as to the genesis of homosexuality. It has been proposed both that it is constitutional and that it arises through a process of habit formation. The latter is debatable. In more recent literature on the subject, great emphasis is placed on the importance of various psychogenetic conditions.<sup>13</sup>

The authors make another striking discovery concerning the origins of most rapists having experienced abnormal homosexual beginnings in their youth.

“Homosexual activity with boys is one form of pedophilia, which is the form used to cover all sexual intercourse with children. In its more serious forms, it is termed pederasty. The perpetrators of these latter offences constitute a large part of those sexual

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<sup>12</sup>David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 136.

<sup>13</sup>Stephan Hurwitz and Karl O. Christiansen, *Criminology* (Australia: George Allen & Unwin Publishers, 1983), 125.

offenders for whom punishment has no effect and on whom, in Denmark, castration may be employed.”<sup>14</sup>

Regardless of the monstrous actions of those participating in aggressive sexual behaviors, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is clear in its description of repeated overall immoral expressions.

What is interesting concerning the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is Abraham’s role in this process. The mere fact that God gives Abraham insight on what was about to take place around his nephew, Lot, speaks to the relationship that He had with his servant Abraham. God allows Abraham the opportunity to cry out for his family members and plead for their safety. According to Joseph Exell in his book, *The Biblical Illustrator*, there is “mysterious power of intercessory prayer.” Exell further expounds:

*God’s willingness to save:* those who censure this narrative, asserting that it represents God as wavering and undetermined, should observe that His resolution was not yet taken (ver. 21); and even if this had been the case that it is indeed always open to the repentance and prayer of those whom it concerns; God has no delight in punishing and destroying; He tried the hard-heartedness of Pharaoh by ten successive plagues; He accepted the repentance of the wicked Ninevites; and He ordered a systematic ritual of sacrifices, solely intended to furnish to man the means of restoring his peace with Himself. If we banish this “vacillation” from the attributes of God, man may tremble before His will; but he can never love Him. But the truth, that the principles on which His government is based are eternal and unalterable, is expressed many times with singular emphasis: “god is no man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent.” God is, indeed, said to have repented that He had created man, and that He had appointed Saul king over Israel; but these are strong expressions denoting how unworthy the former had proved to bear the Divine image; and the latter, to be the representative of Divine sovereignty.<sup>15</sup>

How comforting this must have been for Abraham, for him knowing that God honored him enough to keep him in the influential position of foreknowledge. As Exell

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>15</sup>Joseph S. Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator: Genesis Vol. II* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1967), 32.

brings out, the fact that God keeps Abraham in the know concerning His decision toward the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, takes nothing away from God's sovereignty.

Amazing, that even after these family-members decided to part ways, God still honored the earnest, concerned, and loving prayers of his servant Abraham. Exell further discusses the impact of intercessory prayer for the worth of good men:

[There is an] incalculable worth of good men, however few in number. That good men in a community, however few, are highly esteemed of God. Because of the tender relationship they sustain to Him; His children. Because of the critical position in which they are placed in this life; because of the beneficent influences they are capable of exercising upon the race. That good men in a community, however few, are of inexpressible social worth. Prize good men more than all others; seek to multiply good men by endeavoring to convert bad men to goodness by the gospel of Christ.<sup>16</sup>

What's so interesting is that Lot was still blessed because of his association with Abraham, his uncle. Even though they were not congregating regularly, nor where they in close proximity with their living arrangements, God still provided a way for Lot's escape, through the effectual, and fervent prayers of his uncle, Abraham.

Now, let's consider Abraham: the father of our faith. According to Galatians 3:6: Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."<sup>17</sup> Abraham was very close to God and remained connected to Him, before, during, and after his disconnection with family members. Abraham remained blessed, even after the division that led to the better portion of the land going to his nephew and him having the less desirable area to live on. God honored Abraham and did so with insightful revelation concerning the condition of his family members living in Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham had the awesome opportunity to speak to God directly concerning the outcome

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>17</sup>NIV. Galatians 3:6.

of those in the area, asking Him to save the city if He found 50; 45; 40; 30; 20; or even 10 righteous in the city, not to destroy the city. The Lord agreed to Abraham's plea, and they departed ways.<sup>18</sup>

These particular passages in Genesis 18:27-42 of scripture are helpful to this investigation, as it helps to further examine the role of the believer. While Abraham was given spiritual insight concerning the future of his nephew Lot and family, there is an example presented here that affords the believer the opportunity to influence the situation through prayer and supplication. The most rewarding thing about prayer is that God not only hears us, but he also answers. This story demonstrates the effectiveness of prayer and the immediate exchange of request (from the believer), and the response from God, our Heavenly Father. This model of divine insight to the believing Christian (concerning the believers family), and the opportunity to discuss with God their future plight with a compassionate plea, is the believer of today's role as they ought to discern, pray, and plead for their family members who are among those found guilty of immoral behaviors.

According to Galatians 6:1: "brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."<sup>19</sup> As this scripture points out, there ought to be refuge within the confines of the Church. Believers should restore those who have been caught in a sin; but restore in such a way as to love them as if it were us in their position. This speaks to the love that the believer should have for the one caught in a sin. The believer should be mindful that it could have been them and not the one they are restoring, in the position current. Again, this particular model is what Abraham has set forth before us in this Old Testament scripture,

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<sup>18</sup>NIV, Genesis 18:28-33.

<sup>19</sup>NIV, Galatians 6:1.

where he prayed for the souls of them who were dwelling among those who God was going to destroy because of their detestable behaviors.

The writer's New Testament example comes out of the book of Romans 1:21-32, where Paul writes to the church and gives them distinct instructions on how to conduct themselves apart from them who God has given over to a depraved mind. The following scripture has been used as a source of extensive study:

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.<sup>20</sup>

The above passage of scripture deals with choices: what did the actions and choices of the Romans create? They experienced the power of God, but they refused to acknowledge that power with a response of faith.

Men profess themselves to be wise, but in so doing they become fools. Why? For one simple reason. God does exist, and He has clearly revealed Himself both within men's thoughts and through creation. Therefore, when men's hearts and minds are emptied of God, men have to fill their hearts and thoughts with

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<sup>20</sup>NIV, Romans 1:21-32.

something else. They have to have some other god, some other guiding light or principle to give purpose and meaning and direction to their lives. They have to replace God with something else. They have to have something—some standard, some law, some rule, some person, some god—by which they can guide their lives.

Therefore, when men dethrone and erase God from their lives, they imagine and create their own god within their minds. Men reason and speculate about the ultimate source of life, and whatever they come up with is that to which they give their lives.<sup>21</sup>

There are several similarities from this New Testament example that relates to the Old Testament example of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction. The wickedness was not unusual to God, as history continues to morbidly repeat itself; but God's response is different, however. In the Old Testament examples, God destroyed the earth with water in Noah's day; God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone from heaven; and here in the New Testament example, God permits the perpetual evil to continue to show his wrath by giving men up to uncleanness.

The New Testament allows us to see God's position concerning the similar actions of his people, as they displayed wickedness as their ancestors were also engaged. God's wrath was no different from the Old Testament examples previously discussed and the New Testament example in Romans; but the way in which God's wrath was implemented in the Old Testament is much different from what we find here in the New Testament case in Romans where Paul writes. In the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> verses in this passage, we find that the sins committed in Rome, were the same sins committed in Sodom and Gomorrah, as the men and women abandoned natural desires for the opposite sex and began lusting after the same sex for sexual desires. It seems that the reason for the Romans refusal to respond to faith was because of their strong sinful desires.

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<sup>21</sup>*The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible: Romans Volume 7: New Testament King James Version* (North Carolina: Christian Publishers & Ministries, 1991), 26.



Paul writes to the church in Rome to warn the saints from being influenced to engage in wicked activities. There are several wicked behaviors that are mentioned in this passage, but what is most interesting, is the fact that these same people who were actively engaged in the sinful activities, knew God: *for although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*<sup>22</sup> This passage is confirmation that God was indeed known to the Romans, but the Romans decided not to acknowledge Him as God. As a result, God withdrew His grace from the people. God felt rejected to the extent that He withdrew His grace from them and allowed them to continue to do whatever their hearts desired to do.

Unlike a physical punishment, God has displayed his discontent for homosexual behaviors and the like in a way that is worse: spiritual separation from Himself. In order to understand the gravity of spiritual separation from God, we must first understand the significance of spiritual unity with God through His son, Jesus Christ. Because Jesus, in the New Testament, came to fulfill the law, He mercifully introduced Grace, as the new dispensation. “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of

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<sup>22</sup> NIV. Romans 1:21.

the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”<sup>23</sup>

Paul helps us to further realize God’s kindness as he informs his readers of Jesus’ sacrifice that releases sinful man from the law of sin and death so as to allow the believer freedom, and an opportunity to live according to the Spirit. According to John 10: 10, “the thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”<sup>24</sup> No longer will you find God’s wrath brought about by immediate death in the New Testament, as Jesus’ focus was for his children to develop a relationship with Him. According to Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary:

Christ is a good Shepherd; many who were not thieves, yet were careless in their duty, and by their neglect, the flock was much hurt. Bad principles are the root of bad practices. The Lord Jesus knows whom He has chosen, and is sure of them; they also know whom they have trusted, and are sure of Him. See here the grace of Christ; since none could demand his life of Him, He laid it down of Himself for our redemption. He offered Himself to be the Saviour; Lo, I come. And the necessity of our case calling for it, He offered Himself for the Sacrifice. He was both the offerer and the offering, so that His laying down His life was His offering up Himself. From hence it is plain, that He died in the place and stead of men; to obtain their being set free from the punishment of sin, to obtain the pardon of their sin; and that His death should obtain that pardon. Our Lord laid not His life down for His doctrine, but for His sheep.<sup>25</sup>

As the above mentioned commentary describes, God is shown here as the gracious redeemer of mankind. He illustrates Himself as a Good Shepherd, and we (mankind), as His sheep. And because He put on flesh and became a man, He then

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<sup>23</sup> NIV, Romans 8:1-4.

<sup>24</sup> NIV, John 10:10.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew Henry and Thomas Scott, *A Commentary upon the Holy Bible, Volume 5* (London: William Clowes, 1935), 428.

offered Himself a living sacrifice: “like a sheep to the slaughter...” God became as we are, a sheep, in order for His love to manifest in our lives. Grace is not only God’s love toward us, but it is also the unmerited mercy that we have obtained through Christ rather than our deserved punishment of death for our unrighteousness. It is here, where we find the New Testament shift from the law, punishable by death, to grace, God’s unmerited favor.

It was generally understood in early Christianity that baptism carried with it God’s forgiveness of past sins. It was also understood that one moment in, or condition of, the baptismal gift of forgiveness was the believer’s conversion or repentance (*metanoia*), which was to be evidenced not merely in acknowledgment of sin and in fasting and prayer but also in change of life—including, if necessary, change of occupation. The new Christian was expected to lead a new life, confessing Christ, avoiding idolatry, living in charity with all, practicing strict sexual purity, and eschewing the accumulation of wealth and other worldly entanglements. The standards of the Christian *disciplina*, then, were both strict and high. Inevitably, believers fell short of them—sometimes in small and ordinary ways, but at other times in ways that seemed not merely dramatic but scandalous, and, in the end, inconsistent with profession of Christian faith. Hermas, in his Shepherd, is shocked and outraged at “deacons...who devoured the living of widows and orphans,” “those who quarrel with one another,” “those who have the Lord on their lips but not in their heart,” “those who are rich and those who are involved in a great deal of business.” There was, then, a serious problem for the churches in the question of what to make of, and what to do about, sins committed after baptism. Did such sins exclude the sinner from the Christian community—from the elect people of God? Could they be forgiven?

Hermas reveals a great deal about attitudes in the church of Rome at the beginning of the second century when he announces the burden of the message conveyed in his vision: that to those who heed his words, repentance will be followed by forgiveness, but “if there is still sin after this day [for repentance] has been set, they shall not have salvation.” Hermas’s idea, however—that God had allowed his people, the church, just one historical opportunity for repentance—does not seem to have been representative of the normal view. It is true that the Epistle to the Hebrews (which may itself have been written at Rome) insists that “if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” In the Johannine churches, however, it was taught that “if we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins” — though the author of the Johannine letters qualifies this by admitting that there is a “sin which is mortal.” As he sees it, then, some sins or kinds of sin are in themselves death-dealing, and for them there can be no forgiveness; but for other, more ordinary sins, God’s forgiveness is always available to those who repent.

By the opening of the third century, the Johannine view had prevailed, but in a significantly developed form. On the one hand, it was generally believed that there were certain sins that were unforgivable. Commenting on the statement in 1 John that “there is a sin which is mortal,” Origen makes it clear that idolatry, adultery, and fornication are sins which God does not forgive, and he upbraids bishops (“priests”) who pretend to pardon such sins. Tertullian also distinguishes between “remissible” and “irremissible” sins, and in the latter category he includes not only idolatry, adultery, and fornication but also blasphemy and apostasy. On the other hand, both of these writers are agreed that the majority of ordinary sins are to be dealt with by mutual forgiveness, by prayer, and by making satisfaction through almsgiving and fasting.<sup>26</sup>

Jesus’ attitude is revealed in the story of the adulterous woman. Caught in the act, the “scribes and the Pharisees” bring her before Jesus and remind him that Jewish law requires that she be stoned to death. “Now what do you say?” they ask him. Jesus does not immediately respond. He bends down and inscribes the dust with his finger, apparently in deep reflection. Finally, he speaks, delivering a profound response, “let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” One by one, the woman’s accusers leave. When Jesus is alone with the woman, he looks at her directly and asks if no one has condemned her. “no one, sir,” she replies. “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again,” he says.<sup>27</sup> Jesus’ attitude here could not be more different than that attributed to the Pharisees, who were prepared to brutally kill the woman on the spot in the name of religious law. Jesus engages the woman and addresses her as an equal, not as an authority figure... Finally, he appeals to her conscience to stop sinning.<sup>28</sup> Just as Jesus publicly instructs the woman caught in adultery to “go and sin no more,” we too have an obligation to encourage others to be

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<sup>26</sup>Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church: Fourth Edition* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1985), 111 and 112.

<sup>27</sup>NIV, John 8:3-11.

<sup>28</sup>Will Roscoe, *Jesus and the Shamanic Tradition of Same-Sex Love. Suspect* (San Francisco: Thoughts Press, 2004).

free from the bondage of sin. Paul Jackson takes a deeper look into the biblical objectives of discipline:

In 1 Timothy 5:20 this principle is laid down, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." Modern psychology objects to a negative approach and opposes commandments and warnings. God's Word does not support such a theory, for the theory ignores the awful fact of a depraved human nature. It would be ideal if men could be encouraged to live godly lives without any warning of judgment upon ungodliness. But to suppose they will do so is idealistic and contrary to all observation, as well as to Scripture. God warns of impending judgment and says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). "Because there is wrath, beware..." (Job 36:18).

If sin goes unjudged in a church, we are thereby inviting others to become self-indulgent. It will not do to plead "love" as a basis for neglect. We have all seen parents whose philosophy was, "I love my children too much to punish them." And we have seen a distressing number of such children grow up to be punished by state, church, conscience or God for a life of undisciplined self-will. God does not put love and punishment in opposition to each other. He ways, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth..." Read Hebrews 12:5-11.

The church has a solemn responsibility to restrain sin by proper discipline. If we do not exercise the judgment, the Lord will. "for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:31, 32).<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, the grace of God is obtained through the belief of His Son, Jesus Christ, that He died to bridge the gap for mankind: from the law of sin (resulting in death) to a righteous relationship with God (resulting in the abundant life). Through the acceptance of this fundamental principle, we (all of mankind) now have personal access to the Holy Spirit and are able to establish, retain, and enhance a spiritual relationship with God. According to Merrill C. Tenney, in his book: *New Testament Survey*, he states:

Romans has long been the mainstay of Christian theology. Most if its technical terms, such as justification, impartation, adoption, and sanctification, are drawn from the vocabulary of this epistle, and the structure o fits argument provides the backbone of Christian thought. Its logical method is obvious. First, the theme is announces: "...the gospel...is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that

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<sup>29</sup>Paul R. Jackson, *The Doctrine and Administration of the Church* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1968), 72.

believeth" (1:16). The need for that power is shown by the fall of the world, Jew and Gentile alike, so that "there is none righteous, no, not one" (3:10). If, then, all are helpless and condemned, relief must come from without by providing for them both a legal and a personal righteousness. This is found in Christ, "whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime" (3:25). Since the sinner cannot earn his salvation, this righteousness must be accepted by faith. Individually and racially man is restored to his right position before God through the grace manifested in Christ.<sup>30</sup>

Again, Romans 1 engages the reader and arouses the question: to what degree do the decisions of man create a final choice from God to withdraw his grace? Would it have been better to remain under the law of sin and death rather than to have experienced grace, reject it, and experience spiritual separation from God? To understand the difference between the two punishments by God: the first punishment of sin resulting in death, and the second punishment of man's rejection of God's sacrifice through His son, Jesus Christ, resulting in spiritual separation; we must distinguish the two punishments as separate, but equal to death. This first punishment of death (under the law), is terrible, as there is no remedy save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. The second death, however, is the most horrible, as it is the spiritual death that Paul warns the Romans against in the first chapter of Romans, pleading with them to consider God's punishment for rejecting His moral principles. There are two deaths mentioned in the Bible concerning the dispensation of grace: *He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the Second Death*, Revelation 2:11. If there is a second death, then there must be a first death; and if there is a first and second death, there must be a first and second birth. Jesus helps us understand more clearly how Romans 1 ties into Revelation 2 as He speaks to Nicodemus in John 3: 1-10:

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<sup>30</sup>Merrill C. Tenne, *New Testament Survey Revised* (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 306 -307.

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.'" "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?"<sup>31</sup>

According to the above mentioned passage of scripture, Jesus declares the first birth as physical, while the second birth is spiritual. Here, the duality of life is both introduced and presented by Jesus: being similar in meaning, but different in purpose. And, because there is balance in the spiritual realm; likewise, there is a first death which is also physical, and a second death, which is similarly spiritual. Dr. Lorraine Day further expounds on this subject and states:

The "flesh" cannot be "converted;" it must be "destroyed," disassembled, made new. The "Old man of Sin" must be buried. The carnal (fleshly) mind "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are flesh cannot please God." The "flesh is "destroyed," but the person is not. After all, Jesus said He came "to destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8). We are the Words of Christ. He created us. We are not the works of the devil. Only the sin in our lives is the work of the devil. It is the sin only that is permanently destroyed. Then we become "a new creature in Christ."<sup>32</sup>

Dr. Day helps us by lifting the mental carnality that presents itself as enmity against God. This very fleshly mindset is what Romans 1 talks about concerning them (meaning the Romans who Paul was writing to) who were being influenced by the

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<sup>31</sup>NIV, John 8:1-10.

<sup>32</sup>Dr. Lorraine Day, 2006: *What is the "Second Death"*, <http://www.goodnewsaboutgod.com/studies/seconddeath2.htm> (accessed April 29, 2011).

immorality, causing God's wrath to be revealed. The effects of their choice to continue to do what they wanted to do affected the culture around them and became influences of the people around them. Paul had to address these evil influences and warns the people of the invisible, yet harsh punishment of a depraved mind: a mind that presents itself as enmity to God as it is carnal, and without spiritual consciousness.

At this point, it should be clear that the questions surrounding homosexuality in Christian perspective are far from settled. There is no uniform opinion among Christians; in fact, there is a great deal of disagreement. But as more and more people become less afraid of the topic and more sensitive to the issues involved, a solid groundwork is being laid for creative rethinking on the theological, biblical, and ethical levels, as well as for compassionate counsel on both the practical and personal levels.

Those who dare to pioneer and persevere in such rethinking must be prepared to pay a price. Deeply ingrained attitudes toward taboo subjects do not disappear overnight. Even to suggest a reexamination of the subject can call forth charges that a person is guilty of heresy, of leaving Christian teachings and going against the will of God. For instance, when the ecumenical radio minister for the Netherlands prayed for homosexual people during one of his broadcasts in 1959, he received an avalanche of mail, not only from grateful homosexual people and "confused homosexuals who could not believe that he as a minister could do such a thing," but also from confused and angry colleagues and people who accused him of blasphemy and ignorance of the Bible. Yet his courage in bringing the topic out in the open helped pave the way for the change of attitude that took place in his country.<sup>33</sup>

As the above mentioned quote helps to reveal, there are still very conservative sentiments that exist surrounding the homosexual sin that plagues so many souls. In order for there to be a thoughtful remedy executed by the Word of God through love, there must be willing followers of Jesus Christ to focus their efforts to reach the homosexual as

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<sup>33</sup>Virginia Mollenkott and Letha Scanlon, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978), 152-153.



well. The writer found encouragement from Dale Galloway's book, *Leading in times of Change*, to continue the work of a pastor during times of uncertain transitions.

A leader carries the obligation to help the church he or she serves make the right decisions at the right time. Transitioning from what was to what can be means that the one who leads must finally take the people through a series of decisions to get to the desired outcome. By the nature of the ministry, every pastor is deciding moment by moment what kind of pastor to be, what kind of church to serve, and what is the measure of commitment to be made to see the Kingdom advance in that setting. A pastor does not have the luxury of playing it safe for long if his or her life is to count and the church is to thrive. Those being led trust the pastor to lead, and leading is making decisions, helping others make decisions, and transitioning the church to a greater tomorrow.

If I could say anything to all of you about how to become better pastors, greater leaders, more effective men and women of God, I would say learn how to make decisions on a timely basis. Many times I have gotten alone with God and started writing all the facts on a legal pad. I begin to look at all the information. I consider every option I can imagine. I try to write down everything I can do.

Then I make a list of possible decisions. The right decision; the almost-right decision; the stupid decision; and the unattainable decision. I exhaust my thinking. Decision making is not usually about finding something new you do not already know. Nor is it about finding a panacea. It is really choosing among all the alternatives and options.

Always remember, no transition happens without a decision on someone's part. And no decision is always a decision not to act, and it leads to status quo and no achievement. Let us make our decisions and lead our transitions with the awareness that shines and speaks through the prayer of South American priest Dom Helder Camara: *Every Step I take reminds me that, wherever I am going, I am always on the march to eternity.*<sup>34</sup>

As the above mentioned quote suggests, there should always be openness to the process of transition in order for there to be effective leadership. As leadership helps to determine what vision, mission, and plan of implementation to engage the followers, decisions must first be made. There can be no growth without the decision to grow. Thus, in the area of homosexuality, the writer of this project feels passionately about the congregation's response to homosexuality.

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<sup>34</sup>Dale Galloway, *Leading in Times of Change* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2001), 62-63.

As this thesis continues to develop a ministry model for both the homosexual, and for the believer's response to such behaviors, it is advantageous to dig deep within the Bible, from both the Old and New Testaments, and gain insight concerning God's position, according to scripture, on these matters. From the Old Testament, we understand God to abhor the act of homosexuality, so much so that He made no regrets for destroying entire cities by fire, and even flooding the earth because of his strong disdain. However, in both instances in the Old Testament, God was just with His dealings with the believers who found grace, and saved them from His wrath. Much like the Old Testament, God's feelings concerning the homosexual behaviors of sinful man has not changed in the New Testament; however, His response has shifted to reflect a system of sanctification, through His son, Jesus Christ. The New Testament illustrates the second death of spiritual separation from God: an eternal damnation for those who reject sin's remedy. Both illustrations help to further define the role of leadership in reference to the church and homosexuality within the congregation. There are devastating effects when no process is in place for both the practicing homosexual in the church, now ex-member, and the body of believers who sorrowfully responded without much ministerial guidance. In summary, the biblical perspective of this study has helped to expound upon the Spiritual role of believers to always pray, as did Abraham for the souls of his family members. In addition, it is also equally important to note the New Testament warning concerning those who willfully ignore the knowledge of God; as it is the believer's responsibility to make certain that the practicing homosexual is knowledgeable concerning the things of God in order to remedy their sinful mental embrace.

### **Historical Foundation**

To further the discussion on the role that the Christian believer should play while homosexual activities are being displayed around them, the writer has researched the historical implications of various communities and how their respective societies have handled this practice. The historical foundation will help to connect the cultural, social, and traditional roles of homosexuality as it examines its evolutionary affects throughout time. To broaden the scope, highlights of world historical references will be mentioned; however, the main focus will be on the progression of homosexuality in Western Culture, specifically the United States of America.

This in-depth study should produce a greater awareness of the social response concerning the evolution of homosexuality and the changing perspective of such behaviors from the world at large. In addition, awareness will be raised concerning the male homosexual's plight being at the heart of the hysteria surrounding the subject of homosexuality, as men are seen as the supreme sex in Western Culture. Also, this analysis will point out the difference between the male and female homosexual, as it relates to social treatment and acceptability.

There are several instances in history that give credibility to the homosexual lifestyle being implemented in various societies and having different responses. One of the many early occurrences noted in History include ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics that have been discovered, depicting homosexual relationships as early as the 25<sup>th</sup> Century BC. The images discovered were drawn on an ancient Egyptian tomb that announced the love-tie between two men even after death. This particular couple, Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum, were royal servants and are believed by some to be the first recorded

same-sex couples in history. According to Karema's book, *Disabusing Sexuality*, "the pair is portrayed in a nose-kissing position, the most intimate pose in Egyptian art. This practice was widespread from continent to continent and from generation to the next till the present day. Hence, the evil of homosexuality is not merely a sin of our time, but our era has given it newness."<sup>35</sup> The previous quote derives from Karema's book, where the author takes the position of our present being a repeat of our past. Karema brings awareness of the fact that homosexuality was very prominent in the year 2400 BC, but that we, in the year 2011, have placed an emphasis on the homosexual behavior as something new and taboo. History continues to mark its association with homosexual behavior as we also explore the 4<sup>th</sup> Century heroic figure, Alexander the Great.

One of the best-known ancient examples of bisexual practices comes from ancient Greece, where it was common for men to have lovers of the same sex. They included, for example, the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, in 326 BC, Alexander the Great as a bisexual military leader, influencing parts of the world from Northern Greece, to the entire Persian Empire. In fact, some cultures dictated that males should experience same-sex relationships in their youths before, in adulthood, going on to marry and have families. This practice, called pederasty, sees a sexual relationship between an adolescent male and an older man as an important way to learn about the world. Same-sex love was abundantly celebrated in poetry and philosophy and illustrated on Greek pottery. There is evidence of same-sex relationships (and similar forms of pederasty) in other ancient civilizations, including those of India, Persia, and Japan.<sup>36</sup> History also records Julius Caesar having a love affair

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<sup>35</sup>Canon Karema, *Disabusing Sexuality* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2011), 9.

<sup>36</sup>Paul Bernabeo, *Sex and Society, Volume 1* (London: Marshall Cavendish, 2010), 102.

with King Nicomedes IV of Bithynia in 80 BC; while the first homosexual marriage occurs in 27 BC, with King Augustus ruling the Roman Empire. Romans, like the Greeks, tolerated love and sex amongst men. Two Roman Emperors publicly married men, some had gay lovers themselves, and homosexual prostitution was taxed. However, like the Greeks, passivity and effeminacy were not tolerated, and an adult male freeborn Roman could lose his citizen status if caught performing fellatio or being penetrated.<sup>37</sup>

In year 54, Nero becomes Emperor of the Roman Empire and marries a man by the name of Pythagoras; Nero is the “wife” during this first marriage. When it comes to an end, Nero then moves his attention to another man and this time becomes the “husband” within the same-sex marriage to Sporus, whom Nero has had castrated. The relationship between man and Emperor continues over time as Trajan, one of the most popular of Roman Emperors who rules in the year 97, notoriously has an eye for young men. (Harris, pg. 15) During Emperor Philippus I reign, from 244-249, there was a change in attitude. Roman Emperor Philippus I made a strong attempt to outlaw homosexual prostitution which was widely accepted in Rome, so much so it was taxed and considered suitable; but his efforts failed.<sup>38</sup> In 342, the first law against same-sex marriage was declared by the Christian Emperors Constantius II and Constans. However, in the year 390, Christian Emperors, Valentinian II, Theodosius I and Arcadius declared homosexual sex to be illegal and those who were guilty of it were condemned to be burned alive in front of the public.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Byrne Fone, *Homophobia: A History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000). 48.

<sup>38</sup>Richard Harris, *Closets are for Clothes* (United Kingdom: True Colours Coaching, 2010),16.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

The beginning of the new century, and the Council of London announces most vehemently that homosexuality is a sinful act. Richard I, who is known as the might Richard the Lionheart, is ruler of Great Britain. He becomes king in 1189, and it is said that he involves himself with other men at court and it is documented that on one occasion Richard shares a bed with King Philip II of France as a symbol of unity between the two countries – that's their story and they are sticking to it. During the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, Thomas Aquinas, an Italian priest of the Roman Catholic Church, made a public statement that homosexual acts were deemed second only to murder in the eyes of God. In 1283, the French law commands that homosexuals are not only put to death by burning, but that all their properties are forfeited also. Meanwhile, back in England, King Edward II of England rules Great Britain, he ascends the throne in 1307 as he succeeds his father Edward I. Edward II is infatuated with Piers Gaveston whom he dubs the Earl of Cornwall. In 1312, Thomas Plantagenet, Earl of Lancaster and cousin to the king, summons his own private arm to separate Gaveston from the king; they both run to Scarborough where Edward leaves him so that he can raise his own army against the Earl. Gaveston is captured and taken to Warwickshire and he is slain by the Earl of Lancaaster's swordsmen and then beheaded as he lay dying. Edward avenges his lover's death ten years later when he executes his cousin in 1322.<sup>40</sup>

During the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, in 1532, the Holy Roman Empire declared homosexuality is punishable by death as it is a sin against God and the Holy Church. The following year, King Henry VIII passes the Buggery Act 1533 and pronounces that all same sex activity will result in death. Then twenty years later, in 1553, Mary I, daughter of Henry VIII and his first wife Catherine of Aragon, comes to the throne and reverses

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 17-19.

the religious changes that Henry VIII put into action. Mary also removes all of the laws passed by Henry VIII, even the Buggery Act. Following Mary's death in 1558, Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn ascends the throne and reinstates the Buggery Act along with all other laws that apply to same sex behavior.<sup>41</sup>

The 17<sup>th</sup> Century continues to witness countries from all parts of the globe condemning homosexuality and persecuting all those who take part in same sex relationships. This is being fuelled by the strength of the Catholic Church. In 1655, the Connecticut Colony passes a law against sodomy including women.<sup>42</sup> However, in 1791, as a result of the Great French Revolution, France adopted a new penal code which no longer criminalized sodomy. Thus, France becomes the first West European country to decriminalize homosexual acts between consenting adults. It is during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that the word, 'asexual' is coined for the first time to describe a person who has no particular interest in sexual activities or an attraction to a specific gender. This Century also sees Russia, Poland, and the German Empire criminalize same sex activity, while Argentina, Brazil, the Empire of Japan, Guatemala, Mexico, Portugal, San Morino, and Turkey decriminalize it.<sup>43</sup> In 1857, when James Buchanan became the 15<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America, it was alleged that Buchanan was romantically involved with William Rufus King, as the pair shared a home together fifteen years previous to Buchanan's term in office.<sup>44</sup> So close were President Buchanan and Rufus King, Alabama Senator at the time, that their close relationship prompted Andrew Jackson to

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 25-26.

call King “Miss Nancy” and Buchanan, “Aunt Fancy;” while Aaron Brown, Governor of Tennessee and Postmaster General in the Buchanan administration, spoke of the two as “Buchanan and his wife.” Some of the contemporary press offered much speculation surrounding Buchanan and Kings close relationship, until the two men’s nieces destroyed written correspondences between their uncles to protect their reputations.<sup>45</sup>

Another noteworthy historical event took place in 1895, when one of the most dishonorable trials of the century hits Queen Victoria’s England. British playwright and poet, Oscar Wilde, is charged and tried for “gross indecency” with other men. He is convicted under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, the same law Queen Victoria gave Royal Assent, and he is sentenced for two years in prison with hard labor. Wilde died impoverished in 1900.<sup>46</sup>

The turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century sees the word faggot printed for the first time in a publication in the United States of America in a way to demoralize those who were/are homosexual. In addition, the word ‘gay’ is spoken for the first time in connection with homosexuality in 1920. The decade of the Roaring Twenties witnesses the decriminalization of homosexual acts in the USSR, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru. Radclyffe Hall publishes *The Well of Loneliness*, which brings the subject of homosexuality to the forefront of society.<sup>47</sup> This decade also brings Emma Goldman (1869-1940) to the forefront, as she became the first U.S. public speaker known to defend

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<sup>45</sup>Jean Baker, *James Buchanan* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 60.

<sup>46</sup>Harris, *Closets are for Clothes*, 25.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 26.



homosexual rights, according to Magnus Hirshfeld, founder of the Berlin Institute for Sexual Science.

Goldman spoke out in defense of Oscar Wilde when he was imprisoned in England at a time when, she later wrote, “my sole acquaintance with homosexuals was limited to a few women I had met in prison (where I was held because of my political convictions).” She continued publicly defending homosexual rights, despite colleagues’ objections, reporting in her autobiography that in their view, “anarchism was already enough misunderstood, and anarchists considered depraved; it was inadvisable to add to the misconceptions by taking up perverted se-forms,” and that her response was, “Censorship from comrades had the same effect on me as police persecution; it made me surer of myself, more determined to plead for every victim, be it one of social wrong or of moral prejudice.”<sup>48</sup>

In 1924, the first homosexual rights organization in America was founded by Henry Gerber in Chicago, and was named: The Chicago Society for Human Rights.<sup>49</sup> The group existed for a few months before disbanding under police pressure. In 1926, The New York Times is the first major publication to use the word “homosexuality.”<sup>50</sup> Nearly 35 years later, in 1961, Illinois became the first state of the union to embrace legal reform, removing private consensual homosexual behavior from the interfering regulation

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<sup>48</sup>Claudia Card, *Lesbian Choices* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 63.

<sup>49</sup>Nicholas C. Edsall, *Toward Stonewall: Homosexuality and Society in the Modern Western World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 252.

<sup>50</sup>Bernard W. Bell, *The Contemporary African American Novel: its folk roots and modern literary branches* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 349.

of the law.<sup>51</sup> In 1970, the first Gay Liberation Day March was held in New York City; and the first LGBT Pride Parade was held in Los Angeles that same year.<sup>52</sup> The Acronym: LGBT, refers to the collective group of people who identify themselves as: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer-identified persons.

In 1975, homosexuality is legalized in California due to bill authored by and successfully lobbied for in the state legislature by State Assemblyman from San Francisco Max Gabourty; Elaine Noble becomes the second openly gay American elected to public office when she wins a congressional seat in the Massachusetts State House.<sup>53</sup> Shortly after an openly gay person won a public seat in office, did a major party from the United States of America, the Democratic Party, to be exact, decide to be the first political organization to endorse a homosexual rights platform in the year 1980.<sup>54</sup> In 1990, Colorado Governor Roy Romer issues an executive order prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination in the public sector<sup>55</sup>, and in 1994, the American Medical Association released a statement no longer recognizing homosexuality as an illness.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Lee Walzer, *Gay rights on trial: a reference handbook* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc, 2002), 68.

<sup>52</sup>JoAnne Myers, *The A to Z of the lesbian liberation movement: still the rage* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003), xxxi.

<sup>53</sup>Karen Marie Harbeck, *Gay and lesbian educators: personal freedoms, public constraints* (Malden: Amethyst, 1997), 77.

<sup>54</sup>V. Allen, "Walking the line: Social Movement Interest Groups and the Delicate Balance Between Social Movements and Political Parties" (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2007), 117.

<sup>55</sup>William Eskridge, *Dishonorable passions: sodomy laws in America, 1861-2003* (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 280.

<sup>56</sup>Bertram J. Cohler and Robert M. Galatzer-Levy, *The Course of Gay and Lesbian Lives: Social and Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 358.

In 2002, Tony Knowles, governor of the U.S. state of Alaska, issued an executive order, banning sexual orientation discrimination in the public sector.<sup>57</sup> In February 2004, Ohio governor, Bob Taft, signs the state's Defense of Marriage Act, which denies recognition of same-sex marriages, civil unions, or domestic partner agreements performed in other states.<sup>58</sup> It also outlaws same-sex marriages within the state and forbids state benefits from being extended to gay and lesbian couples. After Ohio made a stance concerning same-sex marriage, San Francisco, California took an opposing position on the matter, allowing same-sex couples to wed in 2004.<sup>59</sup> Although the city officials of San Francisco were issuing these licenses, they were doing so as an act of civil disobedience. Nevertheless, the first same-sex couple to marry in the first known civil marriage in the country, in San Francisco, California, was between a lesbian couple: Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon.<sup>60</sup> As a result of San Francisco's decision to marry the first same-sex couple, an uproar across the country began almost immediately following the marriage that took place between Martin and Lyon. States all across the nation began banning same-sex marriages, a few of which include: Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Oregon, and Utah. There was also a ban against same-sex marriage and civil unions among the following US states: Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Wisconsin, all of which took place during

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<sup>57</sup>Alaska Lambda Legal: *Making the Case for Equality*, 1973-2012, [http://www.lambdalegal.org/states-regions/alaska#quickset-regional\\_offices\\_information=4](http://www.lambdalegal.org/states-regions/alaska#quickset-regional_offices_information=4) (accessed March 17, 2011).

<sup>58</sup>David E. Newton, *Gay and Lesbian Rights: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009), 143.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, *Gay and Lesbian Rights*, 149.

the 2004 ballot. In 2005, Kansas and Texas decided to ban same-sex marriage and civil unions. In 2006, the State of Tennessee banned same-sex marriage; while both same-sex marriage and civil unions were banned from the following states also in 2006: Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, South Carolina, South Dakota, Virginia, and Wisconsin.<sup>61</sup>

In October of 2008, Connecticut overturns a state ban on same-sex marriage and becomes the third U.S. state to legalize marriage for same-sex couples, following Massachusetts and California. In 2009, the Vermont Senate passes a bill legalizing same-sex marriage, and the New Hampshire House votes for gay marriage 186 to 179 after first voting against it, 183 to 182.<sup>62</sup> Also in 2009, the Iowa Supreme Court rules that the state must offer same-sex marriage.<sup>63</sup> Also in the year 2009, both Maine and New York legalize same-sex marriage, while Washington, D.C. mayor, Adrian Fenty, signs the city's same-sex marriage bill into law.<sup>64</sup> In 2010, however, the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, signed the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010.<sup>65</sup> This bill allows openly gay and lesbian people to serve in the United States Armed Forces.

The history surrounding homosexuality is evolutionary and is full of an aggressive agenda to legalize, glamorize, and normalize the open practice of homosexuality. The Western world has proven to become more and more prone to an

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<sup>61</sup>Craig A. Rimmerman and Clyde Wilcox, *The Politics of Same-Sex marriage* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 323.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>63</sup>Man Yee Karen Lee, *Equality, Dignity, and Same-Sex Marriage: A rights Disagreement in Democratic Societies* (The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2010), 31.

<sup>64</sup>Newton, *Gay and Lesbian Rights*, 68.

<sup>65</sup>David F. Burrelli, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell:" The Law and Military Policy on Same-Sex Behavior (Congressional Research Service: Report for Congress, March 25, 2010), 6.

ambiguous definition of human identity; a vague understanding of what marriage is; and a questionable interpretation of the role of men and women in society. These troubling set of circumstances are a result of a diluted tolerance for homosexual activity within our society and in the world at large. In the paragraphs to come, the cultural and social traditions will be explored in an in-depth study surrounding homosexuality and the general public's response to such behaviors.

This study of cultural and social traditions has helped the writer to connect history's cause and response activities surrounding homosexuality. To examine this subject further, John McNeill's book, *The Church and the Homosexual*, helps by dealing with the reasons behind the traditions; the mindsets enforcing the laws; and describes the differences society places on male and female homosexuals. In the following discussion, McNeill highlights a few of the world's universal schools of thought, helping to identify the intellect that has been (continues to be in some cases) embraced that presently governs our social views on homosexuality:

In dealing with tradition, it must not be forgotten that the readily available documents which lend themselves to historical interpretation, such as the Bible, law codes, the enactments of councils, and so on, are really only the surface of that. Underlying these documents are various deep-rooted socio-psychological factors which have come to conscious awareness only in recent times and still await full and careful examination. G. Rattray Taylor, in his book: *Sex in History*, brings out some of the culturally conditioned attitudes on sexuality. He finds a universal phenomenon in cultures based on a patriarchal principle. These cultures always tend to combine a strongly subordinate view of women with a repression and horror of male homosexual practices, whereas cultures based on a matriarchal principle are inclined to combine an enhancement of the status of women with a relative tolerance for male homosexual practices. Taylor concluded that the tradition of the Christian West has been fundamentally "patrist." This may help to explain certain striking anomalies from an ethical viewpoint in that tradition, anomalies which have affected profoundly our laws and public opinion in regard to homosexual practices.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Boston: Beacon Press Books, 1976), 84-85.

The above quote from McNeill's book, has helped to communicate the biggest difference in culture concerning the practice of homosexuality on a world-wide bases.

What McNeill points out is the fact that in patriarchal cultures, where the male role in society is most dominant, there is a low tolerance for male homosexual practices because of the reverent manner in which the general public views the male as the superior sex, and the female as the more servile. Opposite, however, is the culture that tolerates the practice of male homosexuality where the female is the dominant gender and the male is docile. This is a very central argument to understanding the social dynamic concerning the evolution of homosexuality in history. The writer's study has revealed that the more homosexual-friendly a region was the more powerful the female sex, according to the culture, tradition, etc... For example, there was a tremendous male homosexual practice in an area where the female goddess Diana was made supreme. Not surprising, homosexual behavior between men was not as offensive to this society, as women were the more aggressive gender in its culture.

One of the most remarkable of these anomalies is the almost complete disregard of lesbianism in the various documents frequently examined by historians. Although the Holiness Code, for example, explicitly condemns under penalty of death, male homosexual practices and female bestiality, no mention is made of female homosexual practices. Apart from a disputed reference to unnatural female acts by Paul in Romans 1:26, there is no reference to female homosexuality in Scripture and scarcely any in all the other documents of tradition.<sup>67</sup> One of the many things that McNeill tries to accomplish in his book is to stimulate the awareness of his readers, and engage them in the psycho-analytical process. Here, McNeill brings up a very valid argument concerning

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 85.

lesbianism in cultures around the world and throughout history. What McNeill has researched is partly true even in our modern day Western society, where women are able to express themselves freely in a sexual context without much scrutiny from the rest of society. The horrific, tragic, and often burdensome descriptions of homosexual behavior are typically reserved for the male, and little to no mention is ever made concerning the female participation in such abnormal activities.

One of the pivotal questions is why? Why are women so often looked over for their homosexual behaviors, and men are hopelessly put to shame? The female is considered the lesser of the male/female gender combination. Even in instances where women are more powerful in society, the female is “allowed” her choice of sexual desire. In a male dominated society, the woman is the “object” of the male’s affection, and the woman is viewed as less than, and expected to perform whatever sexual fantasy the male desires. That desire can be anything from a lesbian act, to a group sex activity to render optimal pleasure for the dominant male. Again, in male dominated societies, there is little to no disdain for lesbian activity, only in the event when the woman singles her desire for another woman and is no longer attractive to or attracted by a male, is there a real social concern. The same is true for a male in either (a female dominated, or a male dominated) society.

When the male becomes only attracted to men and no longer desires the female for sexual pleasure, there is a grave concern for the sanctity of the society and the culture of the region condoning this kind of activity. McNeill continues in his discussion to reveal the following:

There is a marked tendency in all the sources of tradition to condemn sodomy in terms of a man “playing the role of a woman” with another man, or using another

man “like a woman.” As Baily remarks, this has been looked upon in tradition as the degradation not so much of human nature as of the male as such. If there is a certain message in the narratives of Sodom and Gomorrah, it is the belief of the time in the absolute respect that should be shown the male and the relative lack of concern for the female. Or from another perspective, one begins to suspect in a careful reading of the documents of tradition that human nature and maleness were frequently identified emotionally, if not consciously, in the popular mind. To stimulate or encourage or compel another to simulate the passive coital function of the female represented a perversion intolerable for a society organized according to the theory of the essential subordination of woman to man, a society which particularly valued male aggressiveness and dominance. Consequently, as Bailey remarks, a man who acted “like a woman” was treated as one who had betrayed not only himself but his whole sex, dragging his fellow men down with him in his voluntary disgrace.<sup>68</sup>

This particular passage points out the reverse order of a male dominated society when a man dresses, or demonstrates passive, feminine, docile behaviors. There are several perspectives surrounding this central argument of male passiveness, but the question my study will focus is how society views these behaviors, and how has society’s view of such behaviors influenced the customs, traditions, and/or culture as a whole. History has subtly introduced men “playing the role of a woman” in a harmless manner as a minstrel, actor, storyteller, etc... This open, yet largely inoffensive act, serves its viewers a comedic release, and offers a break from reality the harshness of typical male role in society.

With the introduction of men playing the role of a woman in smaller settings, became less of an unusual activity with the use of television and large audience movie productions. This drag-queen (now coined) act not only served the co-ed viewing audience at large, but it became a growing trend among those who desired watching more of the male role-reversal beyond comedic entertainment, but for sexual pleasure. This growing trend can be witnessed throughout the Western societies today; a few of the

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<sup>68</sup>McNeill. *The Church and the Homosexual*, 85-86.



recent blockbuster crazes include: Mrs. Doubtfire, played by Robin Williams; The Nutty Professor, played by Eddie Murphy; Big Momma's House, starring Martin Laurence; Madea, played by Tyler Perry, etc... The previously mentioned actors who willfully portray these role-reversal character roles are often pardoned by society and seen as inoffensive and funny. The view of the culture is for the male playing the female role to be confident "enough" in their manhood, to be able to play the role of a woman without being bothered by the scrutiny. This view continues to exist and will continue to perpetuate this type of behavior to continue in a naïve manner, teaching our children to accept these behaviors as normal, and often glorifying the images with hanging posters, dolls, and other disturbing paraphernalia.

We as a Western society have now begun to prostitute the God-ordained role of the male full of honor, strength, and courage, in exchange for a few laughs. These twisted set of behaviors have weakened the sanctity of the males' position as protector and provider, and has allowed room for redefinition of the male role entirely. History shows us that truth alone does not render persuasion, but rather, repetition (whether true or not) of anything will produce a harvest of belief. There is an entire nation now desensitized to the perversion of male role-reversal through the addictive, endless world of entertainment. Because of such behaviors, we now see and experience an influx of female role-reversals even in Hollywood! There are now movies, like Set It Off, where Queen Latifah plays a female invert (a female lesbian who acts like a man); there are also several other females in the public's eye who not only act the part of a man, but actually live their normal everyday lives like a man. A few of which include: Rosie O'Donnell, Ellen DeGeneres, Rachel Maddow, etc... The role-reversals of both men and women in

our society have interrupted the natural order of male authority in Western Culture, and have introduced identity issues that hinder both individual and corporate progression.

The premise of male superiority also helps to explain the curious disparity between the moral judgment passed upon heterosexual moral offenses on the one hand and homosexual offenses on the other. There is a tradition of referring to homosexual practices as “the most heinous” of all sins. The tradition of male superiority also helps explain why in the popular view female prostitution, fornication, and even adultery are frequently treated with less contempt than homosexual practices. These immoral actions at least proclaim the essential virility of their perpetrators. Every effort at legal reform concerning male homosexual practices brings forth the irrational contention that male homosexuals do more harm to society than a person who seduces a wife or husband, breaks up a marriage, assaults or injures a young girl, begets and abandons an illegitimate child, etc.<sup>69</sup>

McNeill helps his readers to understand the degradation that homosexuality brings upon a society. McNeill argues that although all of the other social ills are present within a society, like: prostitution, fornication, and even adultery, there is no sin greater than the practice of male homosexuality in modern society, due to the traditional view of male superiority in our culture.

When the male steps out of his traditional role as the “head” of the family, household, and society at large, then society looks for answers to processes that worked before socially accepted role reversals. Although women have come a long way in terms of suffrage, equality, and the like, there is still a sense of connectivity with the stay-at-home mother and wife. Power is now defined by an individual’s determination, and is not merely a right bestowed on a person. Although still a predominately patriarchal society, there is a growing grey, undefined area of ambiguity that is infiltrating the young, the abused, and those without regard to the traditional familial unit. This growing phenomenon is what is also infiltrating into the church and other such established organizations where the traditional patriarch hierarchy is being challenged.

Despite the advances in our knowledge of these processes, the ancient tradition continues to influence our ideas of sexual conduct and morality until the present day: for example, the moral attitude to male masturbation. Bailey believes that the reverence for the male seed as “almost human” was undoubtedly responsible in no small measure for the fact that society has always tended to

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<sup>69</sup>McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual*, 86.

reprobate and punish homosexual practices of males while more or less ignoring those of females.<sup>70</sup>

This quote from McNeill's book is very true to the patriarch society, as God is viewed as male, and the supreme Godhead decided to create the man first, and in His own image. God then created the woman second, and makes reference to her as the weaker vessel, as she was fashioned from the man's rib. There is much to be said concerning this argument of gender superiority as we examine the effects of homosexuality in society; nevertheless, there is only one universal theme throughout history concerning this age-old practice: depending on a societies traditional view of gender, whether the male is the dominant more supreme sex than the female, will influence the acceptance or rejection of open practice of male homosexuality. "The question of the appropriate relation of the church to homosexuals and homosexuality has emerged as one of major importance in the deliberations of denominational bodies. The ensuing debate too often takes the form of a contest between defenders of traditional morality on the one hand and apologists for homosexual life style on the other. What is too often lacking in this conservative-liberal confrontation is attention to pertinent theological reflection."<sup>71</sup>

In order to fully grasp the theological significance of homosexuality, the writer has considered several schools of thought to shape this projects ministry model. The information surrounding homosexuality is exhaustive. Professor David Greenburg explores its existence from multiple disciplines. He provides a cross cultural and trans-historical account of the social organization of homosexuality, the way in which it is

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<sup>70</sup>McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual*, 87.

<sup>71</sup>Dr. Theodore Jennings, "Homosexuality and Christian Faith: A Theological Reflection." *Christian Century*. February 16, 1977, p. 137.

perceived by society, and responded to. Greenburg's comparative approach demonstrates that homosexuality is not a uniform phenomenon across time and that social beliefs about homosexuality stem from identifiable features in the societies in which they are found.

He draws on recent scholarship in anthropology, gay history, and diverse strains of social and psychoanalytic theory to explain this variability of his time.<sup>72</sup>

### **Theological Foundation**

The writer believes the most important response to the questions surrounding around homosexuality must be addressed by the Christian theologian. The theologian, however, must be mindful in their interpretation of the present condition from a broad prospective of variables. There are questions to be answered for the sake of the context: the congregation's response to homosexuality must be influenced by the Christian theologian within the local church. The severity of the practice of homosexuality requires both a spiritual and a doctrinal response. The understanding needed in this area of study must channel through minds open to the will of God and a love for mankind. There are views noteworthy of dialogue.

The writers, Joe Dallas and Nancy Heche respond to the growing concerns of homosexuality in the Christian community:

We hope churches will see the current misguided widespread acceptance and promotion of homosexuality as an opportunity to begin fresh vibrant dialogues on human sexuality and by what standards we should express it. We hope families with gay loved ones will seize the opportunity, however painful the situation to open up more honesty and clarity in their relationships. We hope concerned Christian citizens will see the gay rights movements as an opportunity to challenge the increased secularism of our times by reminding the American culture of its Judeo-Christian and Christian traditions.

Most of all, we hope for the remnant, those who will regardless of prevailing trends and practices, respond to the gospels calling and promise. While

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<sup>72</sup>David Greenburg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 1988).

recognizing a growing resistance to traditional Christian viewpoints in all aspects of culture, we remember that God's sovereignty cannot be restricted, nor can the Holy Spirit be bound. So there will always be those who say "no" to what the world says "yes" to, just as there will always be those willing to say what is unpopular, but redemptive, standing for what is controversial but true, even when truth is being relentlessly systematically obscured.<sup>73</sup>

It is obvious in many congregations that the local theologian (Pastor) is not always equipped to address the conditions of Homosexuality present in the Congregation. The vote of the leaders demands precise navigation through these unidentified waters. The premise to launch from should be the truth as rightly divided by the word of God. Often times, the local church is so traditional, that the social issues of the day are unable to be discussed. In James H. Cone's book, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church*, he discusses the African-American Church dilemma:

The absence of the tools of social analysis may also explain why the black church tends to be as conservative as white churches on other social issues besides racism: women's rights, gay rights, and similar human concerns. We were also slow in taking a stand against the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, not to mention other Third World countries. Asia, Africa, and Latin America were not referred to in National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC) documents until the end of the 1960's, when the Third World was mentioned in a cursory manner. The same was true of other interpreters of black theology. It was as if we were blind to the global nature of human oppression. Martin King was miles ahead of us on that issue; and it is ironic that many of us thought he was too conservative! The fact is that he was in many ways too radical, because he was moving toward an economic analysis, and some say even Marxism.

The reason why King was and still is more radical than the clergy of the NCBC and other interpreters of black theology was the integrity of his commitment and the depth of his analysis. Commitment without analysis leads to romanticism and eventually to despair. Analysis without commitment leads to opportunism and eventually to a betrayal of one's people. The black community needs black theologians who have both a commitment to their people's liberation and the intellectual expertise needed to analyze the nature of their oppression.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Dallas, Joe, Nancy Heche. *The Complete Christian Guide to Understanding Homosexuality* (Harvest House Publishers: Eugene, Oregon, 2010).

<sup>74</sup>James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church, Where have we Been and where are we going?* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 96.

Much of the blatant disclosure within the congregation is due to the following multiple factors: the Church's need for the talent, the tithe, and time of many who are homosexual and serving in the church. The Christian church has become more evolved over time and the congregation looks a lot different from days of old. As society is becoming more integrated and multicultural, so should the atmosphere of the church reflect the racially mixed environment. Edwin Van Kley explores the multicultural impact of society in the church:

Among the more common politically correct terms used on American college and university campuses these days is multiculturalism. A long and cumbersome word, it seems to be misused frequently enough to render its precise meaning uncertain. Adjectivally it is applied to people, to families, to courses, and programs of studies. Administrators and university advancement offices talk about the desirability of a multicultural student body and faculty. By that they seem to mean that it would be desirable to have students and faculty from differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the hope that the cultures they represent will become part of the institution's intellectual and social world and will help students better to understand themselves and that world. The same ideal no doubt motivates what are not always accurately called multicultural programs. But whatever reservations we may have about the use of the term, the ideal behind the clunky word will not go away, and we must, both as historians and as Christians, reckon with it. If I may risk a minimalist definition of that ideal, I think it embrace not only an acceptance of a variety of cultures but also an attempt to understand and respect cultural traditions other than our own in order better to understand our neighbors in this racially and culturally diverse nation and on this shrinking planet. Furthermore we often come to a richer understanding of ourselves, mirror fashion, in comparison with other cultures. We may humble a bit in our attempts to implement this ideal, but in the academy there appears to be rather wide acceptance of it. Certainly our colleges and universities, however much or little they presently embody the ideal, must prepare the next generation to live in this multicultural global village.

Christians face the same imperatives. Increasingly Christian churches in this land are ethnically and culturally mixed, and in the wider world the church has established itself in and acclimated itself to other's traditions and cultures is necessary if Christians are to tell the good new and do Christ's work together in an increasingly small world. Furthermore, Christian also have known all along that humankind is one: created by God, descended from Adam, redeemed in Jesus Christ. We used to sing about it in Sunday school: "red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in his sight." Many churches symbolize the unity of the Christian church across the ages and the miles by celebrating an annual

worldwide communion Sunday. Christian scholars and teachers, therefore, should be among the more ardent proponents of multicultural ideals and goals in their academic institutions.<sup>75</sup>

Although there is an openness expressed in society with the acceptance of various nationalities, there should also remain a standard of holiness that will not change. Because of the homosexual's giftedness being used in the local church, a dictated silence, in reference to their sinful behavior, has increased. The subject and the time calls for a Christian standard of boldness, tempered with considered compassion, and wisdom. "On the subject of homosexuality we are challenged to use speech that is accurate but not insulting; considerate, but uncompromised. I call this adhering to our ABC's that is, making sure our speech is accurate, biblical, and considerate".<sup>76</sup>

Elizabeth R. Moberly expounds from a psychoanalytical position to guide readers with a perspective of Godliness, with the belief that more light will be shown on the subject. According to Moberly: "In the homosexual condition, psychological needs that are essentially pre-adult remain in the person who is in other respects adult. Homosexual activity implies the eroticization of deficits in growth that remain outstanding [from childhood]... This is fundamentally a confusion of the emotional needs of the non-adult with the physiological desires of the adult."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Edwin J. Van Kley, "Christianity, History, and Multiculturalism." in *History and the Christian Historian*, ed. Ronald A. Wells (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 235-236.

<sup>76</sup> Dallas, *Understanding Homosexuality*, 98.

<sup>77</sup>Robert Lewis, *Real Family Values: Leading Your Family into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with Clarity and Conviction* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 1995), 90.

Robert Lewis, in his book: *Real Family Values: Leading Your Family into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with Clarity and Conviction*, has also brought to the readers awareness the factors surrounding homosexual activity. Lewis writes:

During the childhood, the homosexual, whether a man or a woman, has often suffered some form of deficit in the relationship with the parent of the same sex. Damaged, rejected, and traumatized, many homosexuals then seek to repair their lost childhood through homosexual activity.

The greatest safeguard against the sexuality crack is parental consistency—consistency in behavior, consistency in discipline, consistency in fulfilling the parental roles mandated by Scripture. Dr. Irving Bieber writes: “We have come to the conclusion that a constructive, supportive, warmly related father precludes the possibility of a homosexual man.”<sup>78</sup>

The state of mind of any person determines the actions they take. It is of great significance of how they treat one another. The base for ones views: are they secular or spiritual? There is a grave difference in Christian ethics, than other standards to determine the right or wrong of stimuli. It is because of the many causes and effects that there is a great need for clarity. Homosexuality has become the focus of many in society: “Homosexuality is viewed by many as a social problem, as such; there is a keen interest in elucidating the origins of homosexuality among many scholars, from anthropologists to zoologists, from psychologists to theologians. Research has shown that those who believe sexual orientation is inborn are more likely to have tolerant attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, whereas those who believe it is a choice have less tolerant attitudes.”<sup>79</sup>

The cause of homosexuality could differ depending on several variables. When trying to determine the most applicable theory for the Christian congregation to embrace concerning homosexuality, one must consider the intent of the authority by

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid, 90-91.

<sup>79</sup>Lewis, *Real Family Values*, 112.



considering: the entity asking the questions; the entity answering the questions; the level of education of both entities, and a host of other considerations. “There are several words in the titled journal of homosexuality that are noteworthy to be mentioned: *etiology, origins, genetics, choice, opinions, and lay beliefs.*”<sup>80</sup> According to the writers in the *Journal of Homosexuality*, Dr. Sheldon’s article, *Beliefs about the Etiology of Homosexuality, and the Ramifications of Discovering*, presents several possibilities. In genetic origin, there is significant research to homosexuality, as it relates to several contemporary perspectives. The research suggests certain causes and effects to homosexuality.

Recent scientific and media attention has been focused on researching attempting to discern the origins of homosexuality. Homosexuality is generally framed as a social problem which provides intense interests in seeking its causes. Among the scientific studies, exploring the etiology of homosexuality much work has examined the possible influence of genes. Importantly, attributing causation of human characteristics to genetics, generates an idea of framing particular social implications. For example, when traits are understood to derive from genetic origins, they may be perceived as more immutable, natural and or something that cannot be helped. Ascribing the etiology of homosexuality to genetics, applies that homosexuality is immutable, and uncontrollable, and therefore is not a choice or lifestyle.<sup>81</sup>

Research has found that positive attitudes toward homosexuality are associated with the belief that its origins are biological, whereas negative attitudes are associated with the view that its origin is personal choice.

The factors contributing to an individual’s same-sex sexual orientation or sexual preference remain poorly understood. Even the use of general terminology in this field has underlying implications that suggest various assumptions about the etiologic bases. For instance, while the use of the term “sexual orientation”

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<sup>80</sup>Jane P. Sheldon, “Journal of Homosexuality” (Volume 52, Issue 3-4: 2007), *Beliefs About the Etiology of Homosexuality and About the Ramifications of Discovering Its Possible Genetic Origin*. [http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J082v52n03\\_06#](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J082v52n03_06#) (Accessed September 13, 2011).

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, 112-113.

evokes, at best, a relatively neutral stance on etiology, there is no denying the subtle message inherent in the use of the term “sexual preference” to suggest that there is at least some degree of individual choice involved. Two major categories of scientific explanations have even proposed to explain the origins of homosexuality: (1) biological and (2) psychosocial.<sup>82</sup>

Author Kathy Rudy, in the later part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, addresses homosexuality and the Christian ethics. The author suggests that “mainline and progressively minded Christians, should combat the sexism and the homophobia of the rights agenda by examining and moving beyond our commitment to the structure of the family by moving beyond gender and sexual identity politics, and by reconstructing a church politic based on Christian community.”<sup>83</sup>

Rudy argues that “the church is the ideal location for questioning such institutions as the nuclear heterosexual family. The position echoed pervasively in the work ‘that sexuality is a sight of spiritual and communal possibility, a way to proclaim the gospel and remember the call of Christ.’ There are comparisons made showing “some basic difference between the Christian rights and mainline Christianity, the entire book attempts to dig deeper into the social and theological mindsets of the two groups.”<sup>84</sup>

Rudy presents a conglomerate view to strongly consider if the church is to move forward in understanding homosexuality as it relates to human rights and the Christian church. Christian ethics is presented with connections to other entities such as women’s rights, gays, and minorities. As the church is typically viewed as the authority in answering the difficult questions, there are strong tones to the theologian, as sentiments

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<sup>82</sup>Sheldon, *Beliefs About the Etiology of Homosexuality*, 13-14.

<sup>83</sup>Kathy Rudy, *Sex and the Church: Gender, Homosexuality, and the Transformation of Christian Ethics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), xii.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, vii.

are disclosed through research the many positions that have been taken in reference to homosexuality. Irving Bieber does “a study of male homosexuality in psychoanalysis.”<sup>85</sup> The intentions to the research encompassed the work of Sigmund Freud. This most influential thinker was the first to question the concept that homosexuality was a degenerative disease:

A concept that was a pseudoscientific reformation of a moralistic attitude which considered homosexuality synonymous with degeneracy.

Freud’s formulation of the etiology of homosexuality is postulated a continuum between constitutional and experiential elements. As a result consequence, he regards homosexuality as resulting in some cases from exclusively experiential factors, although he cited no clinical or experiential proof of either contention. He regarded the vast majority of cases as products of the interaction of both inherent and extrinsic factors, the relative dominance of each varying in different cases. One of Freud’s basic premises was that all individuals differed in their heredity biologic endowment. He felt that the physical difference among people which distinguished them as individuals must be reflected not only in underlying physiologic metabolic and other characteristics of the biologic organism, but also in terms of needs, drives, action potentials and activity passively.”<sup>86</sup>

The writer believes that which takes place outside the Christian arena, unfortunately, does affect the household of faith. The early sixties was the time that homosexuality was publicized in a major way through a leading magazine. The church should always take the lead when there is a need for information concerning the Kingdom of God. The influence of various secular writers such as analysis’s, and psychologist’s brought information to the forefront concerning the subject of homosexuality. The world’s laboratories of thought should not draw the first conclusion when it comes to a word of compassion or a doctrinal stand in the midst of human concern.

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<sup>85</sup>Irving Bieber, *Homosexuality: a psychoanalytic study* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1988), 3.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, 79.

Bieber conducted a study on '106 male homosexuals.' The needed assistance in performing the task was provided by the society of medical psychologist. "58 psychoanalysts filled out questionnaires on male homosexuals who were in psychoanalytic treatment. Bieber and his associates studied the results of the questionnaires in terms of sexual behaviors, 72 of the men were exclusively homosexual, 30 were bisexual, and 4 were not sexually active at the time of the study. 64 of these men wanted to overcome homosexuality, 32 did not, and ten not answer either way."<sup>87</sup>

The actual recorded results of study showed changes across the board, depending on what the defined condition was. It is not surprising that the results varied. The theologian of yesterday and of the present must recognize the freedom of choice. It is with much needed wisdom moving forward in observation, will desired results be evident.

Joe Dallas explored homosexuality from its closest association and ones personage and those who love the homosexual individual. In the unveiling by the possessor, homosexuality is their reality:

There is a death that takes place, it is not the death of the gay individual, or of his relations of his family, but it is the death of assumptions.

Every relationship is based on assumptions. We assume the person we are in relationship with is someone we know pretty well, so we trust there are no major secrets between us. Our assumptions of monogamy may die when a spouse may find another partner in fantasy or in real life. We don't know how to compete. The assumption that our son or daughter may carry on our tradition, both religious and relational, expires we learn our child has feelings we never assumed he or she would feel, and now holds beliefs we never imaged a member of family would hold. So many assumptions all lost. It is neither morbid nor inaccurate to call it death."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Bieber, *Homosexuality: a psychoanalytic study*, 29.

<sup>88</sup>Dallas, *Understanding Homosexuality*, 24.

The writer agrees with the concepts shared by Dallas. It is a reality for every person when the unimagined is connected with those in close proximity.

The five stage theories by “Dr. Elizebth Kubler Ross, embraced by Dallas are: *denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.*”<sup>89</sup> “The biblical vision of community can thus point beyond tragedy and threats of destruction because it both explains the true nature of the human dilemma and describes the only means of escape: Humans are in a precarious situation, and threaten to bring the delicate created order to a dreadful end, because they are in bondage to diverse forms of slavery. And their escape can come only through the gracious act of a God who seeks to deliver, to heal, to restore, and to reconcile the human family, members with members, and all with their God.”<sup>90</sup>

Each church must define the needs within its context and abroad. The work must be initiated with clear definition of purpose. The need to address homosexuality in the church must be personalized to people who are present within the Christian Kingdom realm. The poor, the needy, the homosexual, all are within the realm of God’s grace. The theologian speaks from the interpretation of the Word of God, to the ears of the hearer. This mandate must remain constant upon every opportunity we find situations as these.

From his book, *Christianity, social tolerance, and homosexuality: gay people in Western Civilization*, John Boswell argues that homosexuals in relation to their families can be compared with disenfranchised Americans.

Gay people are for the most part not born into gay families. They suffer oppression individually and alone, without benefit of advice or frequently even emotional support from relatives or friends. This makes their cause more comparable in some ways to that of the blind or left-handed, who are also

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<sup>89</sup>Dallas. *Understanding Homosexuality*, 23-25.

<sup>90</sup>Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The growth of Community in the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 500.

dispersed in the general population rather than segregated by heritage and who also are in many cultures the victims of intolerance. Gay people are even more revealing than most such dispersed minorities, however, because they are usually socialized through adulthood as ordinary members of society, since parents rarely realize that children are gay until they are fully grown. Their reactions and the reactions of those hostile to them thus illustrate intolerance in a relatively uncomplicated form, with no extraneous variable such as atypical socialization, inability to contribute to society, or even visible abnormality. In every way but one, most gay people are just like those around them, and antipathy toward them is for this reason an unusually illuminating instance of intolerance.

Only when social attitudes are favorable do gay people tend to form visible sub cultures. In hostile societies, they become invisible, a luxury afforded them by the essentially private nature of their variation from the norm, but one which greatly increases their isolation and drastically reduces their lobbying effectiveness. When good times return, there is no mechanism to encourage steps to prevent a recurrence of oppression: no gay grandparents who remember the pogroms, no gay exile literature to remind the living of the fate of the dead, no liturgical commemorations of times of crisis and suffering. Relatively few gay people today are aware of the great variety of positions in which time has placed their kind, and in previous societies almost none seem to have had such awareness.

Because of this, except in cases where they happen to wield considerable authority, gay people have been all but totally dependent on popular attitudes toward them for freedom, a sense of identity, and in many cases survival. The history of public reactions to homosexuality is thus in some measure a history of social tolerance generally.

It is only fair to point out that in addition to the advantages of using gay people to study intolerance, there are several salient disadvantages. The most fundamental of these is the fact that the longevity of prejudice against gay people and their sexuality has resulted in the deliberate falsification of historical records concerning them well into the present century, rendering accurate reconstruction of their history particularly difficult. Distortion on this issue was little known in the ancient world but became more widespread with the dramatic shift in public morality following the fall of the Roman Empire in the West. Ignorance was the major force behind the loss of information on this subject in medieval Europe—with Alcibiades occasionally appearing in medieval literature as a female companion to Socrates—but the heavy hand of the censor was also evident. In a manuscript of Ovid's *Art of Love*, for example, a phrase which originally read, "A boy's love appealed to me less" was emended by a medieval moralist to read, "A boy's love appealed to me not at all," and a marginal note informed the reader, "Thus you may be sure that Ovid was not a sodomite."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> John Boswell, *Christianity, social tolerance, and homosexuality: gay people in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1980), 16-18.

Although John Boswell sympathizes with the homosexual, there is another, more Christ-like position concerning the matter of homosexuality: to love the sinner, but hate the sin. Boswell points out the discrepancies concerning the treatment, socialization, and acceptance of homosexuals, but we must also consider what Boswell so philosophically ignores the fact that there must be a spiritual remedy for these behaviors.

To counter Boswell's argument, Dr. David Field embraces a more literal interpretation of the Bible, while addressing a remedy for such marginalized behaviors. Dr. Field explores the New Testament scriptures that expressly relate to the subject of homosexuality and sexual sins, and concludes that the act of homosexuality is an abomination unto God. However, Dr. Field also makes a clear connection between the homosexual and the Christian through agape love.

In Romans 1, Paul uses homosexual behavior to illustrate the way God judges sinners by abandoning them to the destructive power of the lifestyles they themselves have chosen. Lesbians come under his hammer as well as men who practice gay sex. So do idolaters and the greedy, the envious and the arrogant. There is no league table of wickedness; all these sins illustrate the outworking of 'a depraved mind' (Romans 1:18-32).

"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion"(Romans 1:25-27).

We find a similar list in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Among the 'wicked' who 'will not inherit the Kingdom of God' are 'male prostitutes' and 'homosexual offenders' – along (note) with drunkards, swindlers and other people whose lifestyles are incompatible with God's rule in their lives. As in Romans 1, homosexual offences are not singled out as sins in a league of their own; nevertheless, they are decisively condemned.

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were

justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God”(1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Finally, in 1 Timothy 1:8-10, ‘perverts’ (the NIV’s translation of the same word Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 6:9) feature in yet another list – of ‘lawbreakers and rebels’ this time, men and women whose behavior (sexual or otherwise) ‘is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God’.

In spite of their scattered and illustrative nature, these New Testament verses seem to point clearly to one conclusion: a homosexual lifestyle is against God’s will and subject to his judgment. Some biblical scholars, however, seriously question whether this is what Paul actually meant. And if we genuinely want to let Scripture say what it means (and are not just after textual ammunition to fire at opponents), we must listen carefully to their arguments.

The conclusion is clearly inescapable. In God’s scheme for mankind, from the beginning of creation to the coming of his Kingdom, homosexual behavior has no place.

And yet we have not quite reached the end of the biblical road, as fundamental to the Lord’s nature, according to Scripture, is the quality of *love* (see 1 John 4:16).

Here we have to move with great care. For one thing, ‘love’ is such a slippery word. If we want to use it biblically, we must make sure it is packed with its biblical meaning (*agape* is the New Testament word). And in the second place we must not be taken in by the false reasoning that tries to persuade us that any action – even one that breaks God’s law – is justified if it is done lovingly. Jesus never taught that. He told his followers that love is law’s headline (Matthew 22:37-40). He never suggested that it is the Heavenly Editor’s blue pencil which puts a line through the small print underneath (see, for example, Matthew 5:17-20).

Nevertheless, Christians who uphold the Bible’s condemnation of homosexual behavior with great relish, but without a glimmer of love for homosexual people, earn Mark Twain’s caustic description of being ‘good people in the worst sense of the word’. Homophobia – a fear of homosexuals which leads to rejection – should not be on any church’s agenda.

Christians should be in the forefront of those who protest when homosexuals are treated unjustly. That is because love and injustice are incompatible. Whenever homosexual people are the object of snide humor on the television screen or harsh penalties in the law-courts, genuinely loving Christian people ought to be the first to stand up in their support. Any minority group which suffers discrimination should have full Christian backing in a struggle for their legal and moral rights.

Those who accept the Bible’s veto on homosexual *behavior* must go out of their way to express genuine love for homosexual *people*.

At least two important distinctions underlie this essential Christian requirement: In the first place, temptation is not the same as sin. Even if homosexual acts are wrong in God’s eyes, it is not sinful to be tempted to make love to someone of your own sex – unless, of course, you go on to perform the act



mentally (see Matthew 5:27-28 where Jesus has heterosexuals in his sights). Heterosexual Christians who ostracize their homosexual neighbors simply because of the pattern of temptations they experience are very confused and very wrong.<sup>92</sup>

The writer agrees with Dr. David Field, as there is more to consider than the feelings of practicing homosexuals: we must also keep the Bible's agenda in constant view. The Bible's message of agape love should never be misconstrued for sinful lust between persons of the same sex. Instead of finding ways to encourage Bible inclusion for these sentiments, the focus of theologians should be to identify the sin gap and point people to the bridge through God's Son, Jesus Christ.

The question of healing for the homosexual is one that takes on various sentiments. David Morrison, in his book *Beyond Gay*, discusses in detail the issues surrounding sexual healing:

Few issues attached to the question of same-sex attraction have a greater emotional impact than the question of changing, diminishing, or even eliminating the degree of same-sex attraction in someone's life, with a resulting increase in heterosexual attraction. A number of significant factors have contributed to this subject's emotional volatility.

Finally, many of the faith-based approaches to changing or diminishing same-sex attraction suffered in the early days from a high degree of naïveté and a corresponding lack of nuance and understanding. I recall encountering men and women who had tried a faith-based approach to diminishing or removing same-sex attraction, failed, and walked away with a highly-damaged spirituality. Some had been told they had failed because they hadn't "enough faith" and others because they hadn't "loved God enough." Stories like their only tended to confirm my bias against Christianity as a religion of rubes and snake-handlers. My skepticism about faith-based approaches to diminishing same-sex attraction persisted even after I had come to Christ and become a Catholic.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Dr. David Field, 2005AD. *The Theologian*: the internet journal for integrated theology. <http://www.theologian.org.uk/bible/homosexuality.html> (accessed October 29, 2011).

<sup>93</sup>David Morrison, *Beyond Gay* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1999), 81-82.

Although the Morrison presents an argument of healing affected by the faith community as damaging, another perspective of homosexual healing that incorporates the faith community in a positive light comes from Dr. Mark Laaser's book, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*:

Healing is a lifetime journey, not a one-time event. . . . Knowing there is a process, plan, and vision for healing from sexual addiction includes answering important questions, creating accountability, and understanding how people change. Healing is hard work and addicts and those in pain find that patience is often elusive.<sup>94</sup>

Sex addicts who are willing to heal, who thirst for God, and are able to die to themselves need to be accountable in order to maintain sexual purity. It is important to understand what accountability is and what it involves.

For over seventeen years, I have studied and worked with the accountability models of several recovery and Twelve-Step fellowships. After trying to synthesize the wisdom of these sources, I believe the best demonstration of accountability principles in action is illustrated by the first four chapters of Nehemiah. It is a story of rebuilding a city that has been destroyed. As we will see, the process involved in rebuilding a destroyed city is the same process we can follow to establish accountability and rebuild lives destroyed by sexual addiction.<sup>95</sup>

Another well-known author and scholar, Dr. Mark Yarhouse, in his book, *Homosexuality and the Christian*,<sup>96</sup> makes a persuasive claim for the church to embrace a sense of both humility and charity in response to homosexuality:

Humility is necessary in how we approach our understanding of the causes of homosexuality. Since there are many different possible influencing factors, and no one factor appears to be the factor that determines sexual orientation, humility should move us away from placing blame on parents or focusing on simplistic explanations like the sin of "nothing-but-ism."

Charity is found in how we respond to those in our community who experience same-sex attraction. Fellow believers who are sorting this out are our people. We would do well to see them as our people, so at the very least we should always lead with charity. Charity is also found in realistic biblical hope.

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<sup>94</sup>Dr. Mark R. Laaser, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 121.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>96</sup>Dr. Mark A. Yarhouse, *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends* (Bethany House Publishers: Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2010).

We can support efforts to change sexual orientation, but we can also make sure we communicate to our people that their walk with God, their spiritual maturity, their depth of character is not contingent on the degree of change of sexual orientation they experience. They can pursue a life of Christ, an identity that is central to who they are and is common with all believers. When each of us does this, we begin to taste some of our own future, some of what we are all moving toward as followers of Christ. Our purpose is to praise God, to savor God, to glorify God; that is the believer's essential orientation and identity.<sup>97</sup>

The most important concept for Christians to remember is to bathe the Word of God with love to all individuals who are seeking the truth, regardless of their imperfections. When we as a body of believers get more determined to heal the brokenhearted, rather than justify, condone, or analyze their conditions, we begin to exemplify the mandate that Jesus Christ has set before us.

The Church does not tend to see Christian sexual minorities as “our people”; rather, we see them as having more in common with the gay community than with the community of imperfect followers of Christ. The church has read from the gay script in a way that makes us expect and demand dramatic change of orientation, and this has kept the church from articulating an alternative script of preparing people to take a truly Christian approach to their sexuality.<sup>98</sup>

The homosexual persons who are looking for acceptance are no different from heterosexual sinners who are looking for love and acceptance from God our Father. The quandary is, however, the way in which we as the body of Christ are able to lift the minds of homosexuals to embrace the biblical truth of uncompromising principle. The writer lifts Romans 2:23 as the prevailing scripture for bridging the gap between the congregation and the homosexual which states: “for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” This passage unifies all Christians with an identifiable need for Jesus Christ. Because sin is at issue, regardless of the sin, there is a real need for repentance,

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 217-218.

<sup>98</sup>Yarhouse, *Homosexuality and the Christian*, 214.

salvation, and the sanctification process. According to the *Introduction to Theology*, several points concerning the doctrine of sin need to be made:

Sin is primarily a religious and theological term and not a moral term. Sin is not primarily breaking the moral law, but rather breaking the relationship with God. It is not primarily immorality, but rather rebellion and estrangement. Thus, sin is not the opposite of virtue or goodness but, rather, of faith (see Rom. 14:23). Sin is spiritual and not carnal, a matter of the spirit or self and its pretensions, rather than the body and its impulses. Sin is a state or condition rather than an act, although it issues in acts. Sin is neither essential to human nature, nor a simple deliberate decision. The first takes away responsibility and the second belies the reality of human bondage and weakness.<sup>99</sup>

Another perspective of sin is a self-centeredness that leaves little to no room for God to reside. The following quote helps to further define the nature of sin and its infant-stage originality:

When we open our eyes as babies we see the world stretching out around us; we are in the middle of it; all proportions and perspectives in what we see are determined by the relation—distance, height, and so forth—of the various visible objects to ourselves. This will remain true of our bodily vision as long as we live. I am the centre of the world I see; where the horizon is depends on where I stand. Now just the same thing is true at first of our mental and spiritual vision. Some things hurt us; we hope they will not happen again; we call them bad. Some things please us; we hope they will happen again; we call them good. Our standard of value is the way things affect ourselves. So each of us takes his place in the centre of his own world. But I am not the centre of the world, or the standard of reference as between good and bad; I am not, and God is. In other words, from the beginning I put myself in God's place. This is my original sin. I was doing it before I could speak, and everyone else has been doing it from early infancy. I am not "guilty" on this account because I could not help it. But I am in a state, from birth, in which I shall bring disaster on myself and everyone affected by my conduct unless I can escape from it.<sup>100</sup>

We need not confuse those who are searching for the truth with opposing information not rooted in the Word of God. If opposing information is shared from a worldly perspective and made equal to the Word of God, the source becomes

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<sup>99</sup>Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology: Third Edition* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 152-153.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 153.

questionable and not as valid and the authenticity of the source is laden with loose opinions and speculative notions of diluted doctrine. Jesus' style of communication is most important to consider when analyzing shared information to the masses.

In Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, he discusses the various complexities of teaching the truth of God's word without confusing the message. He writes:

To capture the attention of unbelievers like Jesus did, we must communicate spiritual truth the *way* he did. Jesus, not anyone else, must be our model for preaching. Unfortunately, some homiletics books pay more attention to Aristotle's methods and Greek rhetoric than how Jesus taught.

In John 12:49 Jesus admitted, "The Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it". Notice that both the content and the delivery style of Jesus' teaching were directed by the Father. There's so much we can learn from Jesus' style of communication.<sup>101</sup>

Well-known theologian and author, Charles Spurgeon, from his sermon *The Need of Decision for the Truth*, writes concerning the process of finding biblical truth.

If there be questions which may be regarded as moot, or comparatively unimportant, we shall speak with such a measure of decision about them as may be comely. But points which cannot be moot, which are essential and fundamental, will be declared by us without any stammering, without any enquiring of the people, "What would you wish us to say?" Yes, and without the apology, "Those are my views, but other people's views may be correct." We ought to preach the gospel, not as our views at all, but as the mind of God—the testimony of Jehovah concerning His own Son, and in reference to salvation for lost men. Is we had been entrusted with the making of the gospel, we might have altered it to suit the taste of this modest century, but never having been employed to originate the good news, but merely to repeat it, we dare not stir beyond the record. What we have been taught of God we teach. If we do not do this, we are not fit for our position. If I have a servant in my house and I send a message by her to the door, and she amends it on her own authority, she may take away the very soul of the message by so doing, and she will be responsible for what she has done. She will not remain long in my employ, for I need a servant who will repeat what I say, as nearly as possible, word for word; and if she does so, I am

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<sup>101</sup>Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 223.

responsible for the message, she is not. If anyone should be angry with her on account of what she said, they would be very unjust; their quarrel lies with me, and not with the person whom I employ to act as mouth for me. He that hath God's Word, let him speak it faithfully, and he will have no need to answer gainsayers, except with a "Thus saith the Lord." This, then, is the matter concerning which we are decided.<sup>102</sup>

To further the sentiments shared by Charles Spurgeon, there are times when the Christian must take a stance on issues facing the church from a Biblical perspective only. The only sure way to counter the darkness of the world is to let our light so shine. "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men" (Matthew 5:13).

The writer believes in lifting the awareness of God's love in order to reach those souls troubled by sexual sin. Judy Stamey discusses the theology of servitude as pivotal in the process of saving souls. If true love is shown, and not just talked about, there will be a drawing of the masses to partake in this level of divine connectedness. Stamey expounds upon this thought in the following:

The Scriptures contain many passages of instruction and challenge for believers to become servants. Jesus' life of servant hood was the best example possible for disciples yesterday, today, and tomorrow. A believer's theology of service must begin with understanding the essentials in the life of Jesus and the love that motivated him to a life of service, leading eventually to the cross. When this understanding is clear, believers can live a full and meaningful Christian life that will reflect the lordship of Jesus and inspire others to seek to know how Jesus can change their lives.

A church leader's theology of service can be greatly broadened by passages in Scripture that give specific instructions on providing training for new believers and help them to experience a growth and understanding of their commitment that will lead to a life of service motivated by a love for God. Ephesians 4:12 clearly communicates the responsibility of "equipping the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."

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<sup>102</sup>Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students: Complete and Unabridged* (Zondervan Publishing: Grand Rapids, 1954), pg. 223.

Every believer is gifted to serve God. Every believer is expected to serve God. Every believer must be given opportunities to serve God. An understanding of these ideas helps a church begin to develop a theology of service for its members. Throughout the Scriptures God gives instruction and challenge to every believer to become a servant. Jesus taught by example, using a life of servant hood to show followers what is expected. In Matthew 20:26-28, Jesus teaches, “But whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”<sup>103</sup>

Jesus keeps his mandate fresh in the minds of His disciples as He reminds them of the commission to stay strong in the faith and allow the light of the Word to illuminate the darkness around them.

If all this is true, it means that God is the only cure for sin. The plain truth of life is that a man may master his actions, but he can never by himself master his thoughts and his desires. The more he tries to do so, the worse his state becomes. For that he needs some power outside and beyond himself. In his autobiography, *the Living of these Days*, H.E. Fosdick tells of his experience when as a young man he had a serious physical and nervous breakdown: ‘I learned to pray, not because I had adequately argued out prayer’s rationality, but because I desperately needed help from a Power greater than my own. I learned that God, much more than a theological proposition, is an immediately available Resource.’ The only cure for sin, the only solution to the paradox of manhood, is the indwelling power of God. A man becomes a man, a man reaches his true manhood, when he can say with Paul: ‘It is no longer I who live; but Christ who lives in me’ (Gal. 2:20).<sup>104</sup>

As Christians in the faith, we must also strengthen each other and remain constant in our message of love, hope, faith, and forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ, who makes intercession to God our Father.

To Christians, sanctification means being made holy. Another phrase often used to describe sanctification is to be “set apart” for God’s purposes (“set apart” is the definition of “holy”). There have been many Christians throughout history who have taken control of their internal and external lives and are “faithfully dealing with their desires for the same sex according to the plain teaching of

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<sup>103</sup>Judy J. Stamey, “Equipping the Saints to Serve,” in *Church Administration Handbook: A revised and completely updated edition*, ed. Bruce P. Powers (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 235.

<sup>104</sup>William Barclay, *The Mind of Jesus* (New York: First HarperCollins, 1976), 130.

Scripture.” In other words, they have chosen not to embrace homosexual behavior in spite of their same-sex attractions. For those considering this path, it is important to understand that not only are they not alone in their struggles, but that God can use these circumstances as a means by which He can provide grace and mercy.

Sanctification is not simply a matter of denying yourself pleasure or enjoyment. That is not an accurate way to frame this from a Christian perspective. It involves seeing things in relation to their ultimate purpose and value in light of the kingdom and economy of God.

The assertive advocate might raise the red flag: “There goes another Christian promising the rewards of a future life but denying the pleasures of this life.” But, again, that is not a Christian understanding of the circumstances the believer faces. As C.S. Lewis notes, the fact that heaven awaits the Christian is not “simply tacked on to the activity” of obedient living, for example, but rewards are the “activity itself in consummation.” In other words, the activity of being sanctified is a reward here and now, but just for the afterlife.

The Christian looks seriously at both the activity and its end result. For the Christian, our activity is obedience, discipleship, and sanctification. That is, being made more and more in the likeness of Christ. And the final result of this is to be fully Christlike in the glorification that awaits us in heaven.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Yarhouse, *Homosexuality and the Christian*, 166-167.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The focus of this project is to create a ministry model that will assist the Pastor and Laity with a more productive relationship between homosexuals and heterosexuals through training sessions, discipleship workshops, and sermons with emphasis in biblical truth. The hypothesis for this project was developed through a series of observations concerning the context and their ability to adapt and apply new information into their daily walk with Jesus Christ. Each member of the context group gathered from the True Vine Baptist Church, decided to participate in the various educational seminars, workshops, and listened to pointed sermons to lift the awareness of the congregation's response to the homosexual.

The writer has developed the thesis for this project after careful implementation of David Hackett Fischer's book entitled: *Historians' Fallacies*, he states: "Questions are the engines of intellect, the cerebral machines which convert energy to motion, and curiosity to controlled inquiry. There can be no thinking without questioning—no purposeful study of the past, nor any serious planning for the future. Moreover, there can be no questioning in a sophisticated sense without hypothesizing, and no systematic

testing of hypotheses without the construction of hypothetical models which can be put to the test.”<sup>1</sup>

The researcher has decided to utilize the Christian education method to approach the discrepancies that exist between the homosexual and the congregation. Through Christian education, the researcher has developed a model curriculum that includes biblical, historical, and theoretical information pertinent to homosexuality relative to the church congregation. The educational curriculum developed by the writer was presented in a workshop format and was followed up with two supplementary sermons to further the steer the thoughts of each congregant. As Joseph Murphy, from his book *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind* suggests: “The law of action and reaction is universal. Your thought is action, and the action is the automatic response of your subconscious mind to your thought. Watch your thoughts!”<sup>2</sup> The changing of thoughts during the treatment of this project is what will be monitored.

The strategy behind this treatment is to present to some, and re-introduce to others within the context of the True Vine Baptist Church congregation, to homosexuality as a sin rather than a divide. In an effort to steer the minds of each participant, the researcher has decided to use a Christian Education model in a seven-week treatment series. To start implementation of the seven-week treatment series, a pre-test survey will be given to gauge the present thought condition of the context, informing the researcher of where the sentiments of the context are. The pre-test survey will be conducted, launching the

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<sup>1</sup>David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1970), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Murphy, *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind* (Courier Dover Publications: New York, 2010), 35.

researcher's seven-week treatment consisting of sermons, questionnaires, training workshops, and evangelism exercises.

This model will provide the researcher with an opportunity to address his entire context in a series of sermonic presentations. The researcher will announce a three-week sermon series on the Church and homosexuality. The first sermon will be entitled: *The Bible and Sin*; the second sermon will be entitled: *Did God Change His Mind?*; and the last sermon of the researcher's series will be entitled: *Imperfect People Serving a Perfect God*. To further shape this Christian Education model, the researcher will also conduct a 3-week training series, addressing homosexuality from the Biblical perspective.

Each training session theme will echo sentiments shared from the sermonic topics. The training sessions will incorporate a lecture period; a question and answer, open discussion phase; and a questionnaire assessment will be administered at the end. The following outline of the above mentioned scheduled events are as follows:

### **Seven-Week Treatment Procedure Outline**

#### **Week One:**

- Context Selection and Introduction
- Pre-Testing for the Context

#### **Week Two:**

- Sermonic Presentation entitled: *The Bible and Sin*
- Open Forum Discussion after Sermon

#### **Week Three:**

- Sermonic Presentation entitled: *Did God Change His Mind?*
- Open Forum Discussion after Sermon

**Week Four:**

- Sermonic Presentation entitled: *Imperfect People Serving a Perfect God*
- Open Forum Discussion after Sermon

**Week Five:**

- Workshop Training Session I: *Sexual Sin and its Beginnings*
- Power Point Presentation; Question and Answer Period
- Evangelism Brochure Introduction

**Week Six:**

- Workshop Training Session II: *Forgiveness and Healing Part 1*
- Power Point Presentation; Question and Answer Period
- Evangelism Brochure Exercise 1

**Week Seven:**

- Workshop Training Session III: *Forgiveness and Healing Part 2*
- Evangelism Brochure Exercise 2
- Post-Testing for the Context

The writer has chosen to utilize power point presentations in an effort to define more clearly his method of communicating information to the entire context group; while questionnaires would be used to keep the focus of the study participants. According to Robert Allen Peterson's book, *Constructing Effective Questionnaires*, he discusses the importance of asking the right questions when conducting research.

Like amount of structure, degree of directness is a continuous dimension; it refers to how much is disclosed to study participants about the purpose of a research project, the sponsor of the project, what a researcher hopes to learn from the project, and the nature of the questions asked. At one extreme, full disclosure

means that study participants are told virtually everything about a research project, including its purpose and sponsor, and all questions are transparent in that they directly focus on the phenomena, issues, or topics of interest.<sup>3</sup>

As the above mentioned quote establishes, there are certain questions and themes that need to be brought out in this project in order to pull the most relevant information to be measured.

Additionally, there will be an evangelistic brochure to be introduced and made available to the context group. This brochure will be used to reach the sinner who struggles with homosexuality. The researcher will conduct two training exercises involving the context and the brochure. The training exercises are designed to intentionally provide the context group with an opportunity to familiarize them with using this new educational instrument for evangelism.

This project utilizes a quantitative method of study, helping the researcher to deductively observe a small context group of twelve persons who participate in a number of surveys, questionnaires, and training sessions. This project design and timeline will be discussed with the context group. The context group will consist of twelve volunteers from the True Vine Baptist Church context.

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<sup>3</sup>Robert Allen Peterson, *Constructing Effective Questionnaires* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2000), 5.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FIELD EXPERIENCE

This chapter of the project focuses on what the researcher actually accomplished after having conducted several educational experiments with his context. The objective of this project is for the researcher to create a ministry model that would result in a stronger connection between the heterosexual congregational context and the homosexual as Biblical truth is expounded through Christian education. The writer chose to use a quantitative method of research in order to properly measure his observations. In an effort to guide the writers study of individual enhancement through Spiritual maturity, Felicity Kelcourse's book, *Human Development and Faith*, further enlightens this project as it states:

Human development can be briefly defined as the study of observable physical, mental, and relational changes that occur as human beings are born, mature, age, and die. This definition includes those aspects of human experience that can be registered interpersonally, by one person observing another. But human beings also have inner lives. Intrapsychic, or inward, subjective, changes are more difficult to identify and are by definition unique to individuals, even though they may have much in common with the experiences of others. Not all developmental theories attend to the inner lives of persons.

Because questions of faith necessarily address human interiority, this volume focuses on depth psychologies that consider the inner lives of persons as interpersonally expressed and structural developmental theories that describe individuals' interpersonal expressions of meaning in the context of community. Too much focus on individual experience can give the false impression that individuals exist in a vacuum, apart from the constant presence of external influence. To counter this individualistic tendency in depth psychology, family systems theory reminds us to think in ecological, whole-system terms about the interpersonal, temporal, and environmental contexts in which individual lives unfold.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Felicity B. Kelcourse, *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle States of Body, Mind, and Soul* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 2.

As the above quote mentions, faith deals with the interior of a being. Therefore, the matters of the heart of each person concerning their personal views on homosexuality will be exposed and observed.

### **Week One: Context Introduction and Pre-Testing**

The first process completed by the writer was getting enough participation for this projects experimentation. On Sunday, May 8, 2011, the writer announced to the entire context of True Vine Baptist Church his prayerful desire to conduct a three-week sermonic series on the Congregations Response to Homosexuality beginning the following Sunday, May 15, 2011. The writer expressed his desire to preach the Word of God concerning these matters, as the subject has become a passionate topic among laity. In addition to the three-week sermonic theme announcement, the writer also invited all persons with special questions, comments, or concerns on this particular subject to meet him directly after Sunday morning service.

Thirteen persons requested to meet with the writer after his formal announcement was made over the pulpit. The writer carefully notated each question, comment, and concern given him by those of the context who responded to his invitation. After each person met with the writer, an extended invitation to be a participant of his six-week study was communicated. Of the thirteen who initially met with the writer after the first invitation to meet with him concerning the sermonic subject matter, only twelve volunteered to be a part of the six-week experiment.

The context group was made up of twelve persons: all members of True Vine Baptist Church; seven women and five men, with an age range between 35 and 65 years old. Each of the twelve persons of the context group was asked to complete a pre-test survey of their awareness and attitudes toward homosexuals. The pre-test survey consisted of thirteen statements and

participants were asked to circle the number which most closely reflects their true feelings concerning each declaration with one of the following:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Uncertain
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

The writer was aided in his questionnaire construction by Louis Rea and Richard Parker's book, *Designing and Constructing Survey Research*, which states: "Although they may be clear, simple, and otherwise acceptable, certain words and phrases carry with them the power to elicit emotions. Survey questions must be as neutral as possible to obtain accurate results and to fulfill their obligation to solicit and welcome all points of view. Questions must invite true responses from the entire population and not induce the respondent into giving an answer other than the one he or she would normally give."<sup>2</sup>

Another noteworthy contributing author that has helped to shape the writers positions concerning the creation of relevant research questions come from Seymour Sudman and Norman M. Bradburn in their book, *Asking Questions: a practical guide to questionnaire design*, writes: "the simple reason for making each question as simple as possible is to make the task easier for the respondent, which in turn, will result in more accurate reports of behavior."<sup>3</sup>

The following responses have been colligated from the pre-test questionnaire survey conducted in the first week of the seven-week treatment process:

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<sup>2</sup>Louis M. Rea and Richard A. Parker, *Designing and Conducting Survey Research: A Comprehensive Guide 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, 1997), 51.

<sup>3</sup>Seymour Sudman and Norman M. Bradburn, *Asking Questions: A Practical Guide to Questionnaire Design* (San Fransico, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1982), 39.



Statement 1: The Church of today should include a homosexual ministry

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	41%
Disagree	0
Uncertain	17%
Agree	17%
Strongly Agree	25%

Statement 2: Church members with homosexual family members should be involved with a church led homosexual ministry.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	50%
Disagree	0
Uncertain	25%
Agree	8%
Strongly Agree	17%

Statement 3: All church goers should be aware of the Biblical principles concerning homosexuality.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	17%
Disagree	0
Uncertain	8%
Agree	8%
Strongly Agree	67%

Statement 4: Homosexuality is the greatest of all sins in the eyes of God.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	25%
Disagree	8%
Uncertain	34%
Agree	8%
Strongly Agree	17%

Statement 5: The homosexual lifestyle is fully accepted by society.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	25%
Disagree	33%
Uncertain	8%
Agree	17%
Strongly Agree	17%

Statement 6: There should be homosexual lifestyle literature available for church going Christians.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	33%
Disagree	17%
Uncertain	0
Agree	33%
Strongly Agree	17%

Statement 7: I disapprove of homosexual persons.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	49%
Disagree	17%
Uncertain	17%
Agree	0
Strongly Agree	17%

Statement 8: Same-sex marriages should be legalized.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	58%
Disagree	17%
Uncertain	17%
Agree	8%
Strongly Agree	0

Statement 9: My church should be an advocate for homosexuality.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	25%
Disagree	33%
Uncertain	33%
Agree	9%
Strongly Agree	0

Statement 10: Choosing not to speak against homosexuality is a sin.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	8%
Disagree	25%
Uncertain	25%
Agree	25%
Strongly Agree	17%

Statement 11: I act inhumanely towards homosexual individuals.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	42%
Disagree	25%
Uncertain	17%
Agree	8%
Strongly Agree	8%

Statement 12: I demonstrate the love of God in me when I interact with homosexual men and women.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	8%
Disagree	0
Uncertain	0
Agree	42%
Strongly Agree	50%

Statement 13: My church has taught me how to effectively display God's love when I relate to homosexual men and women.

Pre-Test Attitude Choice	Pre-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	0
Uncertain	16%
Agree	42%
Strongly Agree	42%

As mentioned before, the pre-test survey was distributed and collected prior to the first sermonic presentation.

### **Week Two: *The Bible and Sin* Sermonic Presentation and Open Forum**

The first of the three sermons was titled: *The Bible and Sin*. The writer preached this sermon on May 15, 2011 during the 11am worship service. This sermon introduced listeners to the Apostle Paul's context group and made comparisons to the New Testament Roman society and the present 21<sup>st</sup> century environment. Both Paul's Rome and the city of Newport News are affluent centers of commerce and trade, perfect for evangelism. The sermon made clear to the listeners that "the wages of sin is still death, but the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23). In addition to Romans 6:23, the researcher also used Romans 3:23 for his scripture text.

Romans 3:23 states: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." This verse of scripture helped to further shape the researcher's sermon as it lifted the awareness of humanity's shared crisis of sin. The sermon mentioned that all sin: from fornication to homosexuality, is unrighteous, and that all who participate in sinful activities are damned unless salvation is received. In conclusion, the researcher strongly suggests to his listeners that the good news; the

gospel; the Word of God must be made available to all who become aware of the consequences of sin.

An open forum discussion was held immediately following the sermon presentation, and lasted approximately thirty minutes. Direct feedback on the sermon was engaged, following questions derived from the sermon itself. The question that aroused the most discussion after the first sermon presentation was asked by a context group participant who wanted to know: “are some sins greater than others?”

Several opinions were shared, but all participants were asked to suspend any definitive conclusions until the researcher shared Wayne Grudem’s take on the question in his book, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*.<sup>4</sup> In Grudem’s theological perspective of sin, he explores the notion of legal guilt: meaning, “any one sin, even what may seem to be a very small one, makes us legally guilty before God and therefore worthy of eternal punishment.”<sup>5</sup> Although Grudem makes a strong claim involving all sin worthy of death, he does make mention of various offenses resulting in a range of harm and consequence. He compares such behaviors and subsequent consequences to our American justice system. The writer has provided a full disclosure of Grudem’s explanation in the Appendix Section B portion of this document as it was rendered to his context in response to the participant’s very poignant question.

### **Week Three: *Did God Change His Mind?* Sermonic Presentation and Open Forum**

The second sermon presentation was delivered on May 22, 2011 and entitled: *Did God Change His Mind?* This homosexual specific address lifted the minds of the listener to embrace

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<sup>4</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 219.

the teachings of Paul in the following text: Romans 1:26-27. The researcher makes plain two important truths: “God hates sin; but loves the sinner.” The objective of this sermon presentation was to expose the congregation to the influence of homosexuality in American society, as well as in our own communities and families. The researcher drives home the point that all sin has the same intensity, and that all sin is hated by God.

The researcher further expounds upon the matter as he references Genesis 2:24, indicating God’s original intent when He created both men and women. The researcher also illuminates God’s instructions found in Leviticus, forbidding His people from participating in homosexual activities. A strong position against homosexual practices is made by the researcher from a Bible perspective only, through several Old and New Testament scriptures. The researcher not only clearly stated his position against the practice of homosexuality, but also condemned all sinful actions as enmity against God.

In this sermon conclusion, the researcher lifts a story found in Jim Cymbala’s book, *Fresh Faith*.<sup>6</sup> This story is about a practicing homosexual male who encountered the love of God, through His son, Jesus Christ, and decided to change his lifestyle for good. The researcher was able to connect a repentant attitude and heart of a homosexual with a repentant attitude and heart of a heterosexual through the details of this heartfelt story.

Directly after the second sermon presentation, the researcher once again held a brief, thirty-minute open discussion forum to gather the feedback from his context group of twelve participants. In this open forum discussion, several positive comments were made concerning the story brought out about the changed homosexual. The comment that stimulated the most conversation was made in the form of a question: “if all have sinned, what’s the difference

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<sup>6</sup>Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Faith: What Happens When Real Faith Ignites God’s People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999).

between a sinner and a saint?” This question steered a varied response among the participants, but prompted the researcher to render a thoughtful explanation to help settle the minds of the group.

The researcher shared Kristofer Skrade’s theory made in *The Episcopal Handbook*<sup>7</sup> which lifts the point that a “sinner is a prerequisite for being a saint” (Romans 5:8; Galatians 2:17; and Matthew 9:13). Another noteworthy theological perspective the researcher incorporated in his explanation of sinners and saints was derived from *The Works of Nathanael Emmons, D.D., Third Pastor of the Church in Franklin, Mass. with a Memoir of His Life*.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Emmons makes a real distinction between sinners and saints as he claims saints to be “lovers of God and of His word.” Both Skrade’s theory and Dr. Emmons proclamations concerning the saint and the sinner can be found in the Appendix Section C of this document.

#### **Week Four: *Imperfect People Serving a Perfect God* Sermonic Presentation And Open Forum**

The final sermon from the three-part series on the congregational response to homosexuality was preached on May 29, 2011 and entitled: *Imperfect People Serving a Perfect God*. This presentation made the comparison between those we (mortals) forgive and those God (the divine) forgives. This principle is found in Matthew’s Gospel when Jesus taught his disciples how to pray: “and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us” (Matthew 6:12). The researcher reminded his congregation that they each, as Christians, have a responsibility to “love our neighbor as we love ourselves” (Matthew 22:39). The researcher used II Chronicles 7:14 as his text, lifting the importance of repentance in the never-ending process of sanctification.

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<sup>7</sup>Kristofer Skrade, *The Episcopal Handbook* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2008).

<sup>8</sup>Jacob Ide, D.D., *The Works of Nathanael Emmons, D.D., Third Pastor of the Church in Franklin, Mass. with a Memoir of His Life* (Boston: Congregational Board of Publication, 1861).



The writer also incorporated two passages from the book of Romans: 7:14-25; and 12:2, where Paul discusses his personal dichotomy between good and evil; carnality and spirituality; sin and righteousness. The writer also lifts Paul's recommendation of a daily mind renewal in Christ. The writer also directs his listeners to embrace the love of God as a way in which an imperfect person is able to serve a perfect God.

In conclusion, the writer reminds his congregation of the grace of God as the only option for imperfect people to serve a perfect God. The researcher acknowledged the only cure for sin is the indwelling power of God: "it is no longer I who live; but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Harry Emerson Fosdick<sup>9</sup> was quoted in the researcher's third sermon presentation, as the researcher suggests a constant need for God's grace in order to serve Him.

The last open forum portion of this treatment exercise was most interesting as a question was asked that spurred much discussion: "what sorts of activities can we perform or engage to merit God's grace?" Before the researcher rendered a concrete response, he thought it best to define the word "grace" first. Grace, as categorized by Jerry Bridges in his book, *Growing Your Faith: How to Mature in Christ*<sup>10</sup> is: "grace is God's favor through Christ to people who deserve His disfavor." To further explain the researcher's position, Herbert Lockyer's book, *All the Doctrines of the Bible*,<sup>11</sup> deepens the writer's understanding by the following: "Grace is unmerited favor manifested toward sinners and indicates that the demands of divine justice have been met, seeing that the penalty was placed upon Christ. Grace introduces us into a new realm.

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<sup>9</sup>Robert Moats Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>10</sup>Bridges, Jerry, *Growing Your Faith: How to Mature in Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004).

<sup>11</sup>Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1964).

Through it we are taken out of the sphere of death into life (Romans 5:2; Galatians 1:6). By grace we are fully and freely justified. What a glorious doctrine to proclaim!”<sup>12</sup>

An exhaustive list of resources used to guide the context group in their discussion concerning grace can be found in the Appendix D Section of this document. There, the writer has also included Henry Thiessen’s perspective on grace from his book, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*.<sup>13</sup>

### **Week Five: Workshop Training Session I: *Sexual Sin and its Beginnings***

Along with attending each open forum discussion after the sermonic presentations, the context group was also asked to be present for a three week educational training workshop on the Congregations Response to Homosexuality. Each of these workshops was held at the True Vine Baptist Church location and invitation flyers were given to each context group member participant.

The first gathering discussed sexual sin and its origins. The writer pulls from several sources on the subject, revealing the childhood trauma that is usually surrounded with adult sexual perversions. One of the most helpful resources that were used in this presentation is Robert Lewis’ book on *Real Family Values*<sup>14</sup>. In his book, Lewis reveals a deeper look at children and their various sensitivities that many adults may take for granted.

One of the most riveting questions that was asked during the workshop’s Question and Answer period was: “What safeguards are there for the Christian against executing premature judgments and bias assumptions toward homosexuals?” To help answer this question, the

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 164.

<sup>13</sup>Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979).

<sup>14</sup>Robert Lewis, *Real Family Values: Leading Your Family into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with Clarity and Conviction* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 1995).

researcher pulled from a variety of scholarly sources, most of which had a theological perspective and instructed accordingly:

The verdict-based approach to information gathering and decision making creates a confirming-evidence bias. This bias leads people to seek out information that supports their existing instincts or points of view while avoiding information that fails to support their beliefs. The confirming-evidence bias not only affects where we go to collect evidence but also how we interpret the evidence we do receive, leading us to give too much weight to supporting information and too little to conflicting information, and even preventing us from searching out information that might challenge our beliefs. It is important to the decision process to seek out a range of information and to avoid premature judgments that will cut short the information search process when useful information for the decision process is still available. That is why it is a good idea [for example] to ask people to write down some ideas before coming to a meeting where a key issue is to be discussed and thus avoid being prematurely influenced by those at the meeting.<sup>15</sup>

Another perspective on the topic of premature judgments and preconceived notions can be found in Eileen Gambrill's book: *Social Work Practice: A Critical Thinker's Guide* as she writes:

Preconceptions can lead to incorrect inferences when a theory (1) is held on poor grounds (there is not adequate reason to believe it is relevant); (2) is used unconsciously; or (3) it preempts examination of the data. We may hold theories that have not been critically tested as dearly as theories that have been critically tested and found to help clients attain outcomes they value. We may be unaware of preconceptions that influence our decisions. We may not critically evaluate the accuracy of our beliefs. The more ambiguous the data, the more preconception influence assumptions. Much of our understanding of the world is theory based rather than data based; our interpretations are inferences based on guesses about what may be true. Unwarranted confidence in a theory increases chances of incorrect views of concerns. Overconfidence in a theory increases the likelihood of incorrect views of problems. We are particularly likely to be overconfident of our judgments about people. Only if we critically examine our assumptions may we identify flaws in our thinking and discover better options.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>David Ahlstrom and Garry D. Bruton, *International Management: Strategy and Culture in the Emerging World* (Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2010), 271.

<sup>16</sup>Eileen D. Gambrill, *Social Work Practice: A Critical Thinker's Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 206.

Appendix E presents an inclusive package of all information shared and distributed during the fifth week of treatment. Along with the question and answer period of week five's treatment, there was also an introduction of the model brochure that was presented to the context.

The researcher only introduced the brochure and informed the group of their future involvement with the information-sheet in the final two weeks of treatment. A replica of the brochure is also included in Appendix E of this project.

### **Week Six: Workshop Training Session II: *Forgiveness and Healing Part I***

The researcher decided to explore the healing aspect of homosexuality and incorporated several passages from John Harvey's book, *The Truth About Homosexuality*<sup>17</sup>, where the author explores the various methods of healing from an experienced Christian Counselor's perspective. Harvey chronicles several counseling experiences, but the writer chose to focus on Harvey's study from Dr. William Consiglio's extensive knowledge on the subject.

Along with presenting a healing perspective on homosexuality in a PowerPoint format, the researcher also conducted a question and answer period to engage his participants. One of the most passionate topics that were brought about during this portion of the workshop was birthed out of a question from a context group participant who asked: "What things can a heterosexual person do to help a homosexual person while on their road to healing and change?" This thoughtful question became the center for much discussion, and caused the researcher to go back and pull information to help steer the context into the direction of biblical truth. The researcher was able to quote from several theologians and scholars on the subject, a few of which include:

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<sup>17</sup>John Francis Harvey, *The Truth About Homosexuality: The cry of the Faithful* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1996), 102-106.

Paul Flaman's, *Homosexuality and Following Jesus*<sup>18</sup>; Scott and Kae Andersen's *Homosexuality: Symptoms and Free Agency*<sup>19</sup>; and Stanley Grenz's *Welcoming but not Affirming: an Evangelical Response to Homosexuality*<sup>20</sup> book.

The last part of the workshop consisted of a training exercise of the context group participants to engage with the brochure that was introduced the week prior. The purpose of the exercise was to reinforce the evangelistic component of discipleship while reaching the homosexual. The researcher was able to incorporate several Bible verses pertaining to man's need for God's Son, Jesus Christ, for the remission of sin. It is the researcher's model to incorporate a conversation about sin: its nature, its origination, and its remedy, in order to expose the homosexual's need for healing.

The activities conducted in the week six workshop training session, from handouts, question and answer period discussion, and evangelism exercise worksheet, can be found in Appendix F of this document.

### **Week Seven: Workshop Training Session III: *Forgiveness and Healing Part 2***

The last week of treatment was the researcher's opportunity to wrap-up all of the discussions and questions that were rendered by the context group. The researcher also presented part two of the workshop training session on Forgiveness and Healing. In this presentation, the researcher made his context group aware of the congregation's response to engage in the homosexual's miracle of healing through love. The researcher also made clear his position on the subject concerning the congregational response to homosexuality as he declared: "True Vine

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<sup>18</sup>Paul Flaman, *Homosexuality and Following Jesus* (New York: BPS Books, 2011).

<sup>19</sup>Scott Andersen, and Kae Andersen, *Homosexuality: Symptoms and Free Agency* (Springville, UT: Bonneville Books, 1998).

<sup>20</sup>Stanley James Grenz, *Welcoming but not Affirming: an Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

Baptist Church will accept the homosexual, but will not affirm their behaviors.” This statement was made by the researcher, while several supporting scriptures from the Bible were connected to further explain the writer’s position.

After the *Forgiveness and Healing Part 2* session came to a close, the researcher conducted the *Evangelism Brochure Exercise* part two. It was during this second training exercise that the researcher illustrated full uses of the treatment brochure. The researcher encouraged full participation from the group by involving them in role-play activities. These activities allowed for groups of two to act out a would-be evangelism scenario with the use of the treatment brochure. One person played the role of a member of True Vine Baptist Church, while the other played the role of a non-member (or non-Christian). The researcher provided each group with a sample role-play script that he created to help the person playing the role of True Vine Member/Christian along while utilizing the brochure. The researcher did, however, encourage each person playing the role of the True Vine Member/Christian to only use the script as a guide, but to feel free to customize their respective deliveries. The researcher has provided a copy of the sample role-play script, evangelism brochure exercise 2 handouts, and forgiveness and healing part 2 workshop information in Appendix G of this document.

After the context group had time to experience the evangelism role-play with the treatment brochure, the researcher asked each context participant to take part in one final questionnaire. The questionnaire that the researcher asked the group to complete was the same set of questions that was asked at the beginning of the seven-week treatment. The following data was collected for the post-testing portion of this study:

Statement 1: The Church of today should include a homosexual ministry

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	8%
Disagree	0
Uncertain	0
Agree	17%
Strongly Agree	75%

Statement 2: Church members with homosexual family members should be involved with a church led homosexual ministry.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	17%
Uncertain	0
Agree	17%
Strongly Agree	66%

Statement 3: All church goers should be aware of the Biblical principles concerning homosexuality.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	0
Uncertain	0
Agree	25%
Strongly Agree	75%

Statement 4: Homosexuality is the greatest of all sins in the eyes of God.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	75%
Disagree	25%
Uncertain	0
Agree	0
Strongly Agree	0

Statement 5: The homosexual lifestyle is fully accepted by society.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	50%
Disagree	33%
Uncertain	0
Agree	17%
Strongly Agree	0

Statement 6: There should be homosexual lifestyle literature available for church going Christians.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	17%
Uncertain	0
Agree	17%
Strongly Agree	66%



Statement 7: I disapprove of homosexual persons.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	75%
Disagree	25%
Uncertain	0
Agree	0
Strongly Agree	0

Statement 8: Same-sex marriages should be legalized.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	75%
Disagree	25%
Uncertain	0
Agree	0
Strongly Agree	0

Statement 9: My church should be an advocate for homosexuality.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	75%
Disagree	25%
Uncertain	0
Agree	0
Strongly Agree	0

Statement 10: Choosing not to speak against homosexuality is a sin.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	8%
Uncertain	0
Agree	75%
Strongly Agree	17%

Statement 11: I act inhumanely towards homosexual individuals.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	67%
Disagree	25%
Uncertain	0
Agree	8%
Strongly Agree	0

Statement 12: I demonstrate the love of God in me when I interact with homosexual men and women.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	0
Uncertain	0
Agree	25%
Strongly Agree	75%

Statement 13: My church has taught me how to effectively display God's love when I relate to homosexual men and women.

Post-Test Attitude Choice	Post-Test Attitude Response in Percentages
Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	0
Uncertain	0
Agree	0
Strongly Agree	100%

As mentioned before, the post-test survey was distributed and collected at the end of the Workshop Training Session III of the researcher's seven-week treatment procedure. The conducting of the post-test at the end of week seven's treatment concluded the extent of the researcher's field experience.

## CHAPTER SIX

### REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

With deliberate research, careful observations, and thoughtful execution, the writer has become better equipped to handle matters of sexual perversion as it relates to the church congregational setting. Throughout this process, the writer has refined his skill on how and when to apply new information relative to his specific context. Prior to this research project, the writer would often attribute one perspective to most, if not all, areas of ministry. Fortunately, however, the writer has grown in the area of deliberation and innovative application.

The answer to what the congregational response to homosexuality should be has become more clearly defined by the writer with the quantitative study conducted on the True Vine Baptist Church context group. In summary, the researcher has been successful in helping to improve the relationships between Christian heterosexuals and homosexuals who are on the road to their healing. The writer believes his ministry model will serve his context well; however, understands the timeless process of improvement.

Since the close of this investigative study, the True Vine Baptist Church context group has adopted a *Brokenhearted Ministry* that caters specifically to those in need of emotional healing. In addition, this new ministry focuses on internal conflicts found among those struggling with addiction: whether sexual or substance abuse related. This ministry was birthed as a result of the researcher's project study, and has already scheduled its first six-week workshop series. True Vine Baptist Church's *Brokenhearted Ministry* will be using the same education model format provided in this project. The researcher hopes to expand this ministry in other areas

outside of the context, as the need for emotional healing is a growing concern from the pastoral perspective.

One of the ways in which this project has helped not only the writer and the context group, but also the community around the church, is that it has stimulated effective evangelism. The most important theme brought out by this investigation is echoed in Jesus' words found in the Gospel of Luke: "the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves (10:2-3)." After the implementation of this project, the researcher has noticed an increased interest among persons from around the context community. Along with increased interest, the writer has also observed an improved posture of learning from among those in his context group as a whole.

Since the conclusion of this project, a suggestion was made by one of the context participants to implement a question box for church attendees to present their inquiries at the end of each sermon presentation. This suggestion was offered after successful completion of the project models open forum and question and answer segments. The researcher has decided to execute this proposal as a permanent enhancement to the True Vine Baptist Church's ongoing Christian Education effort.

As the writer concludes this investigation, he continues to research, implement, and examine new information pertinent to his ministry model. The writer wishes to continue learning new ways to point nonbelievers to Jesus. Although Christian Education was embraced in this model, the researcher wishes to expand his study on other methods of reaching the lost, through internet and media in particular.

This process has also allowed the researcher the opportunity to prove he is capable of tackling such a once-overwhelming problem within his context. The researcher has noticed an improved atmosphere for worship as presumptions and biases have presently been suspended. Spiritual growth has been achieved, as the researcher has carefully compared the pre and post test responses.

Prior to this study, participants were asked their attitude choice on the following statement: "I demonstrate the love of God in me when I interact with homosexual men and women." The pre-test attitude response to this question revealed 8% of participants strongly disagreeing; 42% agreeing; and 50% strongly agreeing. When the same question was asked after the seven-week treatment was executed, the response was startling: 25% agreed; and 75% strongly agreed.

Another similar comparison to capture spiritual growth among the context was the last statement on the pre-test asked each respondent their attitude choice on the following: "My church has taught me how to effectively display God's love when I relate to homosexual men and women." The pre-test revealed: 16% Uncertain; 42% Agreed; and another 42% strongly agreed. The post-test, however, revealed 100% of all participants strongly agreed. As the writer reflects upon the various progressive stages this project has taken, there is a new found appreciation for other scholars who have pioneered this same course.

## **APPENDIX A**

WEEK ONE: CONTEXT TREATMENT INTRODUCTION FLYER

PRE-TESTING EVALUATION SAMPLE

# You Are Cordially Invited to be a Study Participant

Please bring your comments,  
questions, and a heart ready to  
receive Biblical Truth!

- You will be a part of a seven-week evaluation: where Pastor Irvin Melvin will be facilitating several learning scenarios.
- You will be asked to be present at each scheduled sermon presentation, workshop, and training exercise, as perfect attendance is a must.
- Your answers to the various questions asked throughout this evaluation will be featured in a doctoral study and placed in a final dissertation document.
- All Sermonic Presentations will be conducted during Sunday Service at 11am; while all Workshop Training Sessions will

**All gatherings will be held at:**

## **True Vine Baptist Church**

**695 J. Clyde Morris Blvd.  
Newport News, VA 23601  
Phone (757) 591-0942**

### **Training Schedule As Follows:**

- **Week 1:** Schedule distribution and Pre-Test Evaluation
- **Week 2:** *The Bible and Sin* Sermonic Presentation, and Open Forum
- **Week 3:** *Did God Change His Mind?* Sermonic Presentation, and Open Forum
- **Week 4:** *Imperfect People Serving a Perfect God* Sermonic Presentation, and Open Forum
- **Week 5:** *Sexual Sin and its Beginnings* Workshop, and Question & Answer Period
- **Week 6:** *Forgiveness and Healing Part 1*, Question & Answer Period, and Evangelism Exercise
- **Week 7:** *Forgiveness and Healing Part 2*, Evangelism Exercise, and Post-Testing Evaluation

Thank You  
for Your



**Sample Pre- and Post-Test Evaluation Sheet**  
**AWARENESS & ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**A Congregation's Response to Homosexuality**

**Instructions:** Please carefully read each statement and circle the number which most closely reflects your true feelings concerning each declaration with one of the following:

1. Strong Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Uncertain; 4. Agree; 5. Strongly Agree

1	The Church of today should include a homosexual ministry.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Church members with homosexual family members should be involved with a church led homosexual ministry.	1	2	3	4	5
3	All church goers should be aware of the Biblical principals concerning homosexuality.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Homosexuality is the greatest of all sins in the eyes of God.	1	2	3	4	5
5	The homosexual lifestyle is fully accepted by society.	1	2	3	4	5
6	There should be homosexual lifestyle literature available for church going Christians.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I disapprove of homosexual persons.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Same-sex marriages should be legalized.	1	2	3	4	5
9	My church should be an advocate for homosexuality.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Choosing not to speak against homosexuality is a sin.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I act inhumanely towards homosexual individuals.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I demonstrate the love of God in me when I interact with homosexual men and women.	1	2	3	4	5
13	My church has taught me how to effectively display God's love when I relate to homosexual men and women.	1	2	3	4	5

*The information used in this evaluation during the pre-testing phase of this study measured the attitudes and awareness of each participant prior to the treatment; while the answers gathered from this same survey distributed after the treatment, during the post-testing phase, measured the sentiments of participants who had undergone the 7-week Treatment Process.*

## **APPENDIX B**

### **WEEK TWO: *THE BIBLE AND SIN* SERMONIC PRESENTATION AND OPEN FORUM DISCUSSION**

## Context Treatment Sermon I

May 15, 2011

### *The Bible and Sin*

A Sermon by Pastor Irvin D. Melvin  
For the True Vine Baptist Church  
Newport News, VA

**Subject:** *The Bible and Sin*

**Text:** Romans 6:23, and Romans 3:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

### **Introduction:**

The Apostle Paul writes to the Roman church. Rome was the capital, the center of the world; it provided the greatest strategic opportunity for world evangelism. Because this city was active, alive, and engaged in heavy commerce, there was an enormous occasion to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul's Rome looked a lot like our world today. Just like today, we are multicultural, socially compatible, and interconnected with the rest of the world right here in our city of Newport News.

Our city, like Rome, is a metropolis. And if you consider the fact that our world has changed into a more interconnected society, where a person in China can talk to a person right here in our midst at a click of a computer mouse, can definitely relate to the more concentrated city of Paul's Rome. And just like today, Paul faced a metropolis of sinful people. Nothing is new under the sun; and so we find the same sins being committed now as then. Because our world is full of people who are born in sin and shaped in iniquity, we, like Paul, have a responsibility to preach the unadulterated Word of God as we continue to interact with persons in our cities and abroad.

## I. The Seriousness of Salvation

Why should we address sin? We need to understand how better to spread the Gospel. We do our world an injustice to speak of God's remedy in His Son, Jesus, and not mention the reasons for the remedy in the first place. God's provision for sin was due to there being sin in the world. We are made aware of sin through the laws of Moses.

Romans 3:23 helps us as Paul declares: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

According to the *Introduction to Theology*, several points concerning the doctrine of sin need to be made:

*Sin is primarily a religious and theological term and not a moral term. Sin is not primarily breaking the moral law, but rather breaking the relationship with God. It is not primarily immorality, but rather rebellion and estrangement. Thus, sin is not the opposite of virtue or goodness but, rather, of faith (see Rom. 14:23). Sin is spiritual and not carnal, a matter of the spirit or self and its pretensions, rather than the body and its impulses. Sin is a state or condition rather than an act, although it issues in acts. Sin is neither essential to human nature, nor a simple deliberate decision. The first takes away responsibility and the second belies the reality of human bondage and weakness.<sup>1</sup>*

Romans 5:8 helps us understand how God views our sinful selves: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." The word "sinners" refers to a man who is sinful, the man who sins by:

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<sup>1</sup>Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology: Third Edition* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 152-153.

- Disobeying God's Word and will
- Living selfishly
- Ignoring God's commandments
- Doing his own thing
- The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes
- From fornication to homosexuality
- Pursuing the pride of life and the things of the world

But thank God for pardoning our many sins by proving His love for us.

- Gerd Theissen: The Historical Jesus: He gives a summary with hermeneutical reflections concerning the historical Jesus and His relationship to the Father. The Proclamation that Jesus presented to both Jews and Gentiles Gerd states:
- Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God is governed by the Jewish understanding of God. God is the unconditional will for the good. Jesus spreads the certainty that this will is soon going to establish itself in the world. God will help the weak to secure their rights, give power to the poor, satisfy the hungry, and offer the sinner a chance of repentance. This unconditional ethical will is already active in the present. What opposes it—Satan, sin and a 'dark side' in God—has already been overcome. Satan has fallen. Sin is forgiven. God's punitive action is directed only against those who reject the unconditional offer of salvation.

Because we all are sinners, we all need atonement for our sins. Because of sin, we all need Jesus Christ. We should thank God continuously for Salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the Good News!

## **II. The Strengthening Through Sanctification (2 Peter 3:18)**

Although atonement has been provided, we now have a responsibility to apply II Peter 3:18 to our lives: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”

- Thus sanctification means making holy or being made holy. Holiness is the distinctive characteristic of God in the Bible. It involves both separateness and exclusion and outgoingness and inclusion. The holy God wills to make the people of God and the creation holy, to sanctify them, to make them be like God.<sup>2</sup>
- Sanctification involves concrete change in human life and not simply an “imputed” righteousness or holiness. This means actual forgiveness and reconciliation among people, actual service of the neighbor, actual manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, and peace (Gal. 5:22).<sup>3</sup>
- What is actually going on in sanctification? How does God the Holy Spirit affect human beings? We cannot describe it univocally, but only analogically. Because God is personal, the analogy of the mutual influence between persons is better than that of the influence of a psychedelic drug, for example. The influence of God the Holy Spirit upon us in sanctification is like the influence of another person upon us, especially a person who loves us. But God the Holy Spirit influences us more internally and more deeply than another person (see Ps. 139: 1-4; Rom. 8:26; Rev. 2:23).

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 219.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 224.

- H.W. Richardson describes it in the following way: His indwelling is a form of presence which is closer and more “unitive” than even the most perfect communion among created beings...Creatures cannot indwell one another. Rather, the perfect form of unity among creatures is the moral communion of friendship. When Jesus Christ sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, however, He makes God present to us in a way which exceeds even the most perfect moral communion. In our union with the Holy Spirit, we are joined to Him even more closely than we are joined to ourselves (since even “self-consciousness” is a form of created presence). Hence Scripture tells us that the Spirit knows us not only better than even our closest friends know us, but even better than we know ourselves. For when we do not know our true desires, the Holy Spirit interprets them to God for us.<sup>4</sup>
- Obedience to the Word of God: Whether or not we understand or agree, we are under obligation to our Lord to obey His Word. The official judgment and punishment of sin is clearly commanded in the Book. Many times we ignore or excuse the sin long after patience and grace have been fully exercised.<sup>5</sup>
- Hebrews 12:1 says: Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

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<sup>4</sup>Thomas and Wondra. *Introduction to Theology*, 224.

<sup>5</sup>Paul R. Jackson. *The Doctrine and Administration of the Church* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1968), 71.

## Open Forum Discussion

### Held after Sermon I: *The Bible and Sin*

The question that aroused the most discussion after the first sermon presentation was asked by a context group participant who asked the question: *are some sins greater than others?* Several opinions were shared, but all participants suspended any definitive conclusions until the researcher shared Wayne Grudem's take on the question in his book, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*. Grudem writes:

Are there degrees of sin? Are some sins worse than others? The question may be answered either yes or no, depending on the sense in which it is intended.

#### **Legal guilt.**

In terms of our legal standing before God, any one sin, even what may seem to be a very small one, makes us legally guilty before God and therefore worthy of eternal punishment. Adam and Eve learned this in the Garden of Eden, where God told them that one act of disobedience would result in the penalty of death (Gen. 2:17). And Paul affirms that "the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation" (Rom. 5:16). This one sin made Adam and Eve sinners before God, no longer able to stand in his holy presence.

This truth remains valid through the history of the human race. Paul (quoting Deut. 27: 26) affirms it: "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them" (Gal. 3:10). And James declares, "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' said also, 'Do not kill.' If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the law" (James 2:10-11). Therefore, in terms of legal guilt, our sins are equally bad because they make us legally guilty before God and constitute us as sinners.

#### **Results in life and in relationship with God.**

On the other hand, some sins are worse than others in that they have more harmful consequences in our lives and in the lives of others, and, in terms of our personal relationship to God as Father, they arouse his displeasure more and bring more serious disruption to our fellowship with him.

Scripture sometimes speaks of degrees of seriousness of sin. When Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, he said, "He who delivered me to you has the greater sin" (John 19:11). The reference is apparently to Judas, who had known Jesus intimately for three years and yet willfully betrayed him to death. Though Pilate had authority over Jesus by virtue of his governmental office and was wrong to allow an innocent man to be condemned to death, the sin of Judas was far "greater," probably because of the far greater knowledge and malice connected with it.

In the Sermon of the Mount, when Jesus says, "Whoever then realizes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of



heaven” (Matt. 5:19), he implies that there are lesser and greater commandments. Similarly, though he agrees that it is appropriate to give a tithe even on the household spices that people use, he pronounces woes on the Pharisees for neglecting “the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith” (Matt. 23:23). In both cases, Jesus distinguishes between lesser and greater commandments, thus implying that some sins are worse than other sins in terms of God’s own evaluation of their importance.

In General, we may say that some sins have more harmful consequences than others if they bring more dishonor to God or if they cause more harm to ourselves, to others, or to the church. Moreover, those sins that are done willfully, repeatedly, and knowingly, with a callous heart, are more displeasing to God than those that are done out of ignorance and are not repeated, or are done with a mixture of good and impure motives and are followed by remorse and repentance. Thus, the laws that God gave Moses in Leviticus make provisions for cases where people sin “unwittingly” (Lev. 4:2, 13, 22). Unintentional sin is still sin: “If any one sins, doing any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity” (Lev. 5:17). Nonetheless, the penalties required and the degree of God’s displeasure that results from the sin is less than in the case of intentional sin.

On the other hand, sins committed with “a high hand,” that is, with arrogance and disdain for God’s commandments, were viewed very seriously: “But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people” (Num. 15:30; 27-29).

We can readily see how some sins have more harmful consequences for ourselves and others and for our relationship with God. If I were to covet my neighbor’s car, that would be sin before God. But if my coveting led me to actually steal the car, that would be more serious sin. If in the course of stealing the car I also fought with my neighbor and injured him or recklessly injured someone else as I drove the car that would be even more serious sin.

Similarly, if a new Christian, who previously had a tendency to lose his temper and get into fights, begins witnessing to his unbelieving friends and, one day, is so provoked he loses his temper and actually strikes someone that is certainly sin in God’s sight. But if a mature pastor or other prominent Christian leader were to lose his temper publicly and strike someone, that would be even more serious in God’s sight, both because of the harm that would come to the reputation of the gospel and because those in leadership positions are held to a higher standard of accountability by God: “We who teach shall be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1; Luke 12:48). Our conclusion, then, is that in terms of results and in terms of the degree of God’s displeasure, some sins are certainly worse than others.

The distinction Scripture makes in degrees of sin does have positive value. First, it helps us to know where we should put more effort in our own attempts to grow in personal holiness. Second, it helps us to decide when we should simply overlook a minor fault in a friend or family member and when it would be appropriate to talk with an individual about some evident sin (see James 5:19-20). Third, it may help us decide when Church discipline is appropriate, and it provides an answer to the objection that is sometimes raised against exercising church discipline, in which it is said that “we are all guilty of sin, so we have no business meddling in anyone else’s life.” Though we are all indeed guilty of sin, nonetheless, there are some sin’s that so evidently harm the church

and relationships within the church that they must be dealt with directly. Fourth, this distinction may also help us realize that there is some basis for civil governments to have laws and penalties prohibiting certain kinds of wrongdoing (such as murder or stealing), but not other kinds of wrongdoing (such as anger, jealousy, greed, or selfish use of one's possessions). It is not inconsistent to say that some kinds of wrongdoing require civil punishment but not all kinds of wrongdoing require it.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Grudem, Wayne, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 219-220.

## **APPENDIX C**

WEEK THREE: *DID GOD CHANGE HIS MIND?* SERMONIC PRESENTATION  
AND OPEN FORUM DISCUSSION

## Context Treatment Sermon II

May 22, 2011

*Did God Change His Mind?*

A Sermon by Pastor Irvin D. Melvin  
For the True Vine Baptist Church  
Newport News, VA

**Subject:** *Did God Change His Mind?*

**Text:** Romans 1:26-27

“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did exchange the natural used for that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemingly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was fitting.”

### **Introduction:**

Do you know a person who is gay? What has been your response to them? The question of homosexuality and its impact on the fabric of society has been the subject of conversation, debate, and legislation for many years. While many people debate the issue with a passion on one side or another, those who know the Lord must always keep two truths in sight: God hates all sin but God loves all sinners. God hates the wrong things we do, but he always loves us.

### **I. The Tragedy of Adam and Steve**

God is not pleased with many of the choices we make, but God always loves us. With that in mind, every believer should approach the subject of homosexuality not as a matter of legality that can be controlled simply by the passing of laws, but a matter of morality which is determined by our relationship with God and his relationship with us.

Although many people make jokes about those who live the gay lifestyle and frown on the very idea of people of the same sex living as a family; nearly everyone knows at least one

person who openly or privately embraces the gay lifestyle. We work with men and women on the job who discuss their preferences openly. In the work place they are generally honest, hardworking, law abiding citizens who are not monsters, seeking to attack every heterosexual person they see. When it is all said and done, regardless of their orientation, they are people, who have chosen a lifestyle that is dramatically different from what we believe to be acceptable in the eyesight of God.

Since the late 1960's we have seen an increasing number of people "coming out of the closet." We have seen movie stars, ministers, musicians, educators and plethora of others throw back the veil of secrecy that has hidden their secret lives and acknowledge that they have a gay or lesbian sexual preference. As more television programs depict the life style as an acceptable, if not curious, alternative an increasing number of people are coming out of the closet, shocking family, friends and co-workers. After the initial shock was over we learned that our family is the same person and we love them anyway. We learn that our coworkers are different but are still human beings and we love and work with them despite our differences.

The Black community, already reeling from social problems that have robbed us of fathers and strong masculine figures in our families, has also been unusually hurt by the alarming number of Blacks in the gay population. We keep it on the "down low." The "down low" is a term which referred to otherwise straight men who secretly had "encounters" with other men, but openly enjoyed reputations as ladies' men. It was not talked about. We kept it on the down low. So, we don't want to talk about the 2001 USA today headline that read: "1 in 3 young gay Black males are HIV positive," or the Boston Globe headline that notes "Gay Black men hit hard by the HIV Virus." We didn't talk about it but it started to slip out. In 1995, Brian McKnight started singing "On the down low." The next year, R. Kelly released, "Keep it on the down low."

Somehow we think if we don't talk about it, it will go away. So when HIV takes another victim, it is never mentioned as a contributing cause of death. At the funeral, we "keep it on the down low," refusing to speak a truth that is too painful for us to admit.

The Black church community, as a rule, ignores the problem. At our national conventions and assemblies, the subject is rarely discussed, as if "keeping it on the down low" will make it go away. Yet, the gay lifestyle is growing in the Black community. We express private disgust when we hear reports of men in motels, women in the back seats of cars and we are privately anguished when we learn sometimes that even those we least suspected are in the number. Yet, we "keep it on the down low."

One outgrowth of this growing trend in our community is a rise in HIV/AIDS cases, particularly among Black men. "AIDS Action" a Washington D.C. study group showed that as late as 2009, there were 7,297 cases of AIDS in Virginia, with 59% of that number representing Black men. This is a great problem for Black women. Why? Because while Eve may be loyal and faithful to Adam, in too many instances, Adam is slipping around on the "down low" with Steve, then returning home and infecting her with AIDS.

Black women are coming out of the closet too. Where men have the problem of Adam and Steve, there are many women who are now joining the growing number of those who are being called "Madam and Eve." When Black women learn that many of the heroes of Black history were bi-sexual or lesbian, some were encouraged. They have learned about Alice Walker, Angela Davis, Lorraine Hansberry and hundreds of others who have openly admitted lesbian preferences, prompting many young Black women to reach out to other women to retreat from what they fear will be abusive relationships with men. This poses a great problem for the Black family.

As the strongest members of our family begin to reject men and turn to their own, the final nail of strength that holds Black families together is weakened as already confused Black children become completely confused trying to figure out which of their two mothers is playing the daddy. What does the Word of God say about all this? Is the Bible silent? Are these lifestyles a matter of personal preference not addressed by our Lord and Savior?

As Christians, we know that the Word of God is unmistakably clear on the subject of homosexuality. Its words cannot be twisted, torn apart and patched together to make it say something that it does not say; but the overwhelming teaching of the Bible is that homosexuality in all of its forms for whatever reason is not acceptable to God. Even while the Bible frowns on the sin itself, it also repeatedly makes it known that God hates all sin with the same intensity; there are no little ones and big ones. He hates all sin but he never stops loving people, who in their own weakness, may have been caught in the web of one sin or another.

What does the Bible say? What does the Bible say about sexual orientation? It begins in Genesis Chapter 2. In the first two chapters of the Bible, we see God's plan for living creatures: "male and female" created He them, each of the purpose of replenishing or populating the earth, neither of them given all that was necessary to reproduce within their own gender. While science has discovered some species in which certain animals can reproduce asexually, it is not the case with humans. It is intended that a man and a woman would create what the Bible calls "one flesh." Genesis 2:24 says: "therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Thus, the Bible indicates the original intent for our kind. It was an "Adam and Eve" type arrangement.

## II. Homosexuality Appears in Scripture

The first reference to Homosexual acts is found in Genesis 19 in reference to Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot and his family lived in the city of Sodom which was visited by angels. The men of the city wanted to “know” them and threatened Lot. “Know” is a biblical term that means to have intimate relations with them. In verse 8, Lot even offered his two virgin daughters to the men to keep them from molesting the angels, but they (the angry mob of homosexual men) refused. Ultimately, they were blinded by the angels and the city was destroyed. Because of what happened in Sodom, all unnatural sexual relationships are called “sodomy” after the city of Sodom and its homosexual men.

It was a sin that was ignored. The Old Testament had no tolerance for homosexuality at all. Homosexuals, both male and female were put to death. Leviticus 18:22 says, “Thou shall not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination.” Leviticus 20:13 says, “If a man also lieth with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”

In the New Testament it is equally condemned. Romans 1:26-27 says: “for this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature. And likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was fitting.”

Going even further, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says: “know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionist, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” The Bible spares



no pains to make sure Christians understand that Adam and Steve or Madam and Even is not acceptable in the eyesight of God.

### **III. Homosexuality Cannot be Spiritually Justified**

There are many who try to embrace their homosexual lifestyle as well as their Christian beliefs at the same time. It is an impossible task. Those who do generally do not believe in whole teaching of the Bible, only some of its teaching. They believe, for example, the portions of the Bible that speak about how God blesses, heals, strengthens, protects, loves, and forgives. They don't accept the parts of the Bible that condemn their lifestyle as accurate, and if they do, they tend to give a different meaning to God's words.

Many claim that God made them with a homosexual orientation, thus it cannot be a sin for them to act on what he gave them. A sexual orientation is an appetite. Appetites prompt optional activity, not required activity. Homosexuality is an appetite or a preference; it does not require a person to act at all. In fact, there are millions of people in the nation who live abstinent by choice, regardless to their orientation. Our inner desires, whether they are heterosexual or homosexual, often produce guilt because something call sin inside of us keeps pushing us to act against the will of God. No matter what your orientation, you face the same struggle which is the struggle to overcome the urges of the flesh. The fact that we keep having these thoughts makes us feel guilty. However, only our actions can be judged sinful. We can control our actions. Both our guilt and our actions can be forgiven by the grace of God.

### **IV. God Still Loves**

Finally, brothers and sisters, if you have learned anything from today's thought, it should be that no matter how bad we have twisted our lives around, we can always come home to a loving God. God loves us even though He hates what we do. He does not endorse homosexuality

just as He refuses to endorse promiscuity among heterosexuals. God hates sin; but He loves the person affected by the sin.

In his book, *Fresh Faith*, Jim Cymbala shares the story of Steve: a polished, intellectual young man who grew up in the hood of Southeast D.C. He shared an apartment with three homosexual men and often read the Bible, despite his homosexual tendencies. Sometimes at night, Steve would try to discuss what he read about homosexuality with his roommates and they told him “Oh, don’t worry about that, you’re reading the wrong parts...Read the Psalms, or the Proverbs. God is a God of love and anything that loves, is fine with Him.” Steve became troubled about his lifestyle. The Word of God tugged at him. One day, he attended the large church across from his apartment and felt the love of God shown to him by the people of God in that church as he walked in the door.

Steve felt the love of God overpowering him. He didn’t tell anybody that, but when he went home, he decided to end his homosexual encounters with his roommates. Next, he moved out altogether; then finally, he changed his friends. He heard his insides or his flesh, speak to him, but heard God speaking to him louder. Eventually, Steve met a beautiful woman, they married and raised family and both began to witness to others that the power of God can change both our orientation and our actions if we will trust Him.

God’s love is a powerful love that can overcome our weaknesses! That weakness may be homosexuality, but it could also be drunkenness, gambling, fornication, adultery, wild living, drugs, and even criminal activity. The good news is that there is no sin that God is not willing to forgive. There is no mistake that He is not willing to forget and give us a new chance. There is no orientation that He is not willing to redirect. There no life so broken that He cannot fix it.

There is no life so lost that He can't help you find it again! There is no lifestyle so spiritually draining that He can't breathe new life into it.

God's love is a soul saving love that overlooks our past faults and only sees our willingness to live for Him. That's why Christ came to this earth, to give us another chance! That's why He died on an old rugged cross. That's why He arose after three days and nights. He did it all to give us one more chance! It would be a tragedy for Adam and Steve to reject His offer and choose a life without God.

## Open Forum Discussion

### Held after Sermon II: *Did God Change His Mind?*

The inquiry that aroused the most discussion after the second sermonic presentation was asked by a context group participant who asked the question: *if all have sinned, what's the difference between a sinner and a saint?* Several opinions were shared, but all participants suspended any definitive conclusions until the researcher shared Kristofer Skrade's opinion from *The Episcopal Handbook*:<sup>1</sup>

#### **How to Tell the Difference between a Sinner and a Saint**

Many Christians claim they can tell the difference between saints and sinners. Sinners are naughty and do naughty things, they say, and saints are nice and do nice things. For Episcopalians, however, who strive to seek and serve Christ in all people, distinguishing saint from sinner has never been easy.

#### **Embrace the sinner so that the saint can be revealed. Avoid pulling punches.**

Fearlessly and truthfully answer the question, "am I (or, are you) a sinner?" based strictly on the evidence at hand. (Hint: when in doubt simply measure yourself or the other person against the Ten Commandments.) If you hedge by saying, "No, not totally. I keep some commandments sometimes," you are blissfully deluded.

#### **Bone up on what the Bible says about it.**

Scripture makes clear that being a sinner is a prerequisite for being a saint (see Romans 5:8; Galatians 2:17; and Matthew 9:13). Why else would a saint like the apostle Paul "boast" that he was himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15)? Why else would he confess that "I do not do the good I want but the evil I do not want is what I do"?

#### **Be Aware**

Although Christians are exhorted to "tame the flesh," they can't make themselves "less of a sinner" over time. You can't become, say, 35 percent sinner and 65 percent saint if you just work really hard at it. You can't change the percentage of sinner/saint within you.<sup>2</sup>

Another noteworthy theological perspective the researcher incorporated in his explanation of sinners and saints was derived from *The Works of Nathanael Emmons, D.D., Third Pastor of the*

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<sup>1</sup>Kristofer Skrade, *The Episcopal Handbook* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 138-139.

*Church in Franklin, Mass. with a Memoir of His Life.*<sup>3</sup> Dr. Emmons makes a real distinction between sinners and saints in the following:

If there be an essential distinction between saints and sinners, then sinners are very liable to be fatally deceived and corrupted by those who lie in wait to deceive and destroy. Saints have an antidote against the poison of error, that sinners are entirely destitute of. Saints are lovers of God and of his word; they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. David says to God, "O how love I thy law!" "I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold."

The hearts of all good men are attacked to dine truth. But sinners are lovers of their own selves, and haters of God, and equally haters of his Word. They love darkness rather than light, and error rather than truth. This they have always manifested, when both truth and error have been equally exhibited before them. They were more ready to hearken to the false, than to the true prophets under the law; and they have been more ready to hearken to erroneous, than to orthodox preachers under the gospel. They still carry in their hearts a supreme love to error. They love to hear any preachers who tell them there is no essential difference in the characters of saints and sinners. They love any errors better than any truths, and any preachers better than those who preach the doctrines according to godliness.

All errorists have human nature on their side; and it is not strange that they make proselytes of those who are under the entire dominion of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God. There never was a time when all classes of sinners in this country were so much exposed to be led into gross religious errors, as at this day. A spirit of false zeal to spread false sentiments is everywhere enkindled, and everywhere spreading like electrical fire, and there is no want of combustibles anywhere. All who are destitute of the love of God and of the love of truth, are surrounded with dangers by the enemies of all righteousness. The self-righteous are in danger of Arminianism. The self-conceited are in danger of Unitarianism. The vicious and profligate are in danger of Universalism. "Let everyone that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Jacob Ide, D.D., *The Works of Nathanael Emmons, D.D., Third Pastor of the Church in Franklin, Mass. with a Memoir of His Life* (Boston: Congregational Board of Publication, 1861).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* 261-262.

## **APPENDIX D**

WEEK FOUR: *AN IMPERFECT PEOPLE SERVING A PERFECT GOD* SERMONIC

PRESENTATION AND OPEN FORUM DISCUSSION

## Context Treatment Sermon III

May 29, 2011

*An Imperfect People Serving a Perfect God*

A Sermon by Pastor Irvin D. Melvin

For the True Vine Baptist Church

Newport News, VA

**Subject:** *An Imperfect People Serving a Perfect God*

**Text:** II Chronicles 7:14

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

### **Introduction:**

#### **Romans 7:14-25:**

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

#### **Romans 12:2:**

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

## I. The Seriousness of Sin

**Immorality:** In 1 Corinthians 5, immorality is declared to demand reproof and refusal of fellowship as long as the sin is continued and unconfessed. Moral looseness is so prevalent that even the most sheltered individuals are aware of it. To those who deal realistically with the men of the world, the situation is appalling. It has invaded even the most fundamental churches and moves quite openly without even a mild reproof in many cases. The church cannot retain its power and testimony unless it deals with moral uncleanness.

**Disorderly Walk:** A disorderly walk requires discipline (2 Thess. 3:6, 14). This involves a walk that is in disobedience to the Word. Paul says, "...Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition [that is, the teaching] which he received of us...And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him..." This is further colored by the command (2:15): "...Stand fast, and hold the traditions [teachings] which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." Paul was not commanding to withdraw fellowship merely from those who would not work (3:11-13), as some claim. He was commanding such action toward all brethren in Christ who persisted in disobedience to any apostolic and Biblical teaching. He spoke of oral commandments or teaching (2:15) because at that time much of the New Testament was unwritten, and God had given to the apostle's special gifts of knowledge and authority by which the early churches were guided until the Scriptures were completed. Now the Word of God is the sole standard of faith and practice, and no oral pronouncements of pastors, councils or popes can bind the conscience. It is common and commendable, however, to define our doctrinal convictions in brief statements of faith. These have no authority, but they clarify by explanation and must be subject to proof from the Word.



## II. The Strengthening Through Forgiveness

**Biblical Attitudes in Discipline:** If sin is reproofed with harshness and bitterness, the reproof itself involves sin. If the attitude is simply to “throw him out of the church,” it is far from Biblical. It is not natural to the flesh to do anything but strive under such conditions; and there is grave danger that in the heat of trials we may fall into fleshly attitudes. The Lord is never honored by this, and such actions must be avoided.

Obviously, church discipline should not be implemented over trivial difference. Furthermore, we may often willingly suffer wrong for Christ’s sake if the offense is personal. We certainly are to do this rather than take a brother to court before the world (1 Cor. 6:1-8). However, there are many motives besides self-vindication for bringing offenders to account for their wrongs. Failure to do so is often unfair to them, the Lord and the church.

**Love:** Love for brethren who are still in sin is a must! “Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thess. 3:15), is the Biblical attitude. The Lord manifested this tenderness toward a wayward Peter. Love is a great solvent. By it the Spirit of God will dissolve the bitterness in some hearts, whereas argument and evidence will only harden them.

Many such instances have come to my attention. A pastor had dealt for hours with a man who had fallen into serious sin, but he had made no apparent progress in leading the man to confess and forsake his sin. The burden pressed so upon the pastor’s heart under the Spirit’s ministry that, unexpectedly and unbidden, tears flowed freely. In a few moments the other heart was broken, and tears and confession came with the observation: “I never realized that I had a pastor who cared that much for my soul.”

Obviously such attitudes cannot be forced; they must be real if God is to bless! Furthermore, not all tears manifest real Christian love, nor is love always manifest in tears.

But we should love our brethren enough to weep over them when they are out in the world and in sin. Read 1 Corinthians 13 often.

**Forgiveness:** Forgiveness to those who repent and confess is a basic law of the Word. Read the Lord's words as recorded in Luke 17:3 and 4. Little wonder, in the light of our own haughty, unforgiving hearts, the next words of His disciples were, "Increase our faith."

The absolute standard of forgiveness is set before us in Ephesians 4:32: "And by ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." His forgiveness to us was not of the sort, "I shall forgive, but I can never forget." He forgave us fully, freely and finally.

It is true, however, that we were not assured of His forgiveness until our sins were acknowledged and we recognized that He had judged the sin, paid its full penalty at Calvary, and proclaimed to us that forgiveness through His infinite grace. It is also true that a brother who has sinned should not expect his brethren to merely whitewash his sins; he must be willing to acknowledge them and accept forgiveness as brotherly grace.

The blending of these four attitudes into one attitude is essential. Spirituality in our relationship to God, uncompromising opposition in our attitude toward sin, love and compassion for those ensnared in sin and gracious forgiveness to those who confess their sin are all the results of the work of the Spirit. They should exist simultaneously and perpetually in each of our lives. As they do, church quarrels will cease; personal differences with attending heartaches will disappear. The world around will know we are born of God because we love our brethren.

This is not idealistic. The Spirit of God can and will produce such attitudes in us if we yield to Him. These things are the fruit of the Spirit; they are not attained by willpower. On

the contrary, the absence of these attitudes is sin, stemming out of self-will. We need to be candid with ourselves and judge ourselves before we undertake to help our brethren!<sup>1</sup>

### III. Conclusion:

If all this is true, it means that God is the only cure for sin. The plain truth of life is that a man may master his actions, but he can never by himself master his thoughts and his desires. The more he tries to do so, the worse his state becomes. For that he needs some power outside and beyond himself. In his autobiography, the *Living of these Days*, H.E. Fosdick<sup>2</sup> tells of his experience when as a young man he had a serious physical and nervous breakdown: 'I learned to pray, not because I had adequately argued out prayer's rationality, but because I desperately needed help from a Power greater than my own. I learned that God, much more than a theological proposition, is an immediately available Resource.' The only cure for sin, the only solution to the paradox of manhood, is the indwelling power of God. A man becomes a man, a man reaches his true manhood, when he can say with Paul: 'It is no longer I who live; but Christ who lives in me' (Gal. 2:20).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paul R. Jackson, *The Doctrine and Administration of the Church* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1968), 70 -71.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Moats Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>3</sup>William Barclay, *The Mind of Jesus* (New York: First HarperCollins, 1976), 130.

## Open Forum Discussion

### Held after Sermon III: *Imperfect People Serving a Perfect God*

The inquiry that aroused the most discussion after the second sermon presentation was asked by a context group participant who asked the question: *what sorts of activities can we perform or engage to merit God's grace?* Several opinions were shared, but all participants suspended any definitive conclusions until the researcher shared the Jerry Bridges' definition of "grace" first: "grace is God's favor through Christ to people who deserve His disfavor."<sup>4</sup> Bridges furthers his discussion on grace in the following:

Because grace is foundational to our Christian growth, it's important that we have a correct understanding of it. Unfortunately, there is a lot of misunderstanding about the nature of grace.

Perhaps the most common misconception of grace is captured in a statement I once read: Grace is the idea that we are loved and accepted by God just as we are and that God's approval does not have to be earned; it is simply there. Here, God seems to be pictured as the proverbial, indulgent, divine grandfather in the sky who smiles down upon us regardless of our behavior and character. This seems to be typical of the average person's understanding of God's grace.

By contrast, however, the Bible teaches us that the grace of God "teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives" (Titus 2:12). God does love us and accepts us as sinners "just as we are." But He does not leave us that way. Rather, by the same grace through which He saves us, He sets about to change everyone who experiences that grace.

The statement that "God's approval does not have to be earned but is simply there" is not true. God's approval does have to be earned. But the gospel tells us that His approval was earned for us by Jesus Christ in His sinless life and sin-bearing death. It is true that God's favor does not have to be earned by us. In fact, it cannot be earned by us. But it comes to us without earning because Jesus paid for it in our place as our substitute.<sup>5</sup>

Another noteworthy authority concerning the question of grace comes from Herbert Lockyer's book *All the Doctrines of the Bible*, which states:

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<sup>4</sup>Jerry Bridges, *Growing Your Faith: How to Mature in Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Chapter 3: *Disciplined by Grace*.

An examination of the word “grace” shows that there is nothing ungenerous or mean in its provision. Everything about it is enriching and ennobling. In Greek terminology *charis* implied a favor freely done, without claims or expectation of return. Aristotle, defining the term, says that it suggests “something that is conferred freely, with no expectations of return, and finding its only motive in the bounty and free-heartedness of the giver.”<sup>6</sup>

Grace is unmerited favor manifested toward sinners and indicates that the demands of divine justice have been met, seeing that the penalty was placed upon Christ.

Grace introduces us into a new realm. Through it we are taken out of the sphere of death into life (Romans 5:2; Galatians 1:6). By grace we are fully and freely justified. What a glorious doctrine to proclaim!<sup>7</sup>

Henry Thiessen’s perspective on grace from his book, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, further expounds on the subject and declares:

God uses many different means to bring people to himself for fellowship and salvation, and all of these may be considered, in the wider sense, means of grace. But we concur with Berkhof, who has written: Fallen man receives all the blessings of salvation out of the eternal fountain of the grace of God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ and through the operation of the Holy Spirit. While the Spirit can and does in some respect operate immediately on the soul of the sinner, He has seen fit to bind Himself largely to the use of certain means in the communication of divine grace. The term “means of grace” is not found in the Bible, but it is nevertheless a proper designation of the means that are indicated in the Bible.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1964), 163.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 164.

<sup>8</sup>Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 300.

## **APPENDIX E**

WEEK FIVE: *SEXUAL SIN AND ITS BEGINNINGS*

WORKSHOP TRAINING SESSION I; QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD; AND

EVANGELISM BROCHURE INTRODUCTION

## **Workshop Training Session 1: *Sexual Sin and its Beginnings***

**Tuesday, June 7, 2011, 6-7pm**

### **Children don't Bounce; They Break**

Like an egg cast to the ground, kids develop cracks that linger for a lifetime. These cracks remain hidden; they sear a child's soul and mark his or her life in a thousand different ways. And much of a child's life will be spent trying to fuse the cracks together again.

Kids don't bounce; they break. Children are not rubber; instead, they are fine crystal, easily damaged. A child is a terrible thing to break.

### **Exposing the Fault Lines of Childhood**

What are the cracks that can damage a child for life? There are four.

#### **1. The "love" crack.**

- a. When a child's hunger for love is denied, he or she is placed at risk, emotionally and psychologically.
- b. The pathologies men feel today as a result of this love deficient may well grow even stronger as we take our first steps in the twenty-first century. A mom deficit—not just a dad deficit—looms large on the horizon. Because of the pervasive influence of feminism, the next generation may not just be yearning for fathers, but for mothers as well. Today, fewer and fewer moms are nurturing their children through the first six years of development. Large doses of love are crucial at this season of a child's life.
- c. According to one study, 50 percent of all children under the age of five are now in some kind of regular daycare arrangement; half of these are under two years old. A Rand Corporation survey found that 38 percent of all women in America who

become pregnant are back in the work force by the time their children are three months old.<sup>1</sup>

- d. Women may “find” themselves in their careers, but they lose their children in the process. More than anything else, children need love—lots of it. They need warm hugs and encouraging words. Children need heavy doses of affection—affection expressed physically, verbally, and emotionally. Chuck Swindoll writes:

- i. Many a young woman who opts for immoral sexual relationships does so because she can scarcely remember a time when her father so much as touched her. Unaffectionate dads, without wishing to do so, can trigger a daughter’s promiscuity. All of this leads me to write, with a great deal of passion, “Dads, don’t hold back your affection.” Demonstrate your feelings of love and affection to both sons and daughters, and don’t stop once they reach adolescence. They long for your affirmation and appreciation. They will love you for it. More importantly, they will emulate your example when God gives them their own family.

- e. A male mentor is one who cares for your soul. Fathers can help their sons being the journey to manhood, but other men must shape it and affirm it. Quoting George Gilder, William Gairdner makes this powerful observation:

- i. Men and women, [George Gilder] argues ...are from birth very, very different from each other. But men become radically different from women around puberty, with the onset of male androgenic hormones, and

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Lewis, *Real Family Values: Leading Your Family into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with Clarity and Conviction* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 1995).



from that point onward a man's body is full only of undefined energies—and all these energies need the guidance of culture.

- ii. And the one aspect of culture that is crucial to a man's development is the community of other men.
- f. From mother to father; then father to male mentors; and finally, from male mentors to the Lord Jesus Christ. The final path to manhood is internal and is consummated when a man develops an authentic personal relationship with Jesus Christ. At some point in his life—whether it's at thirteen, twenty-two, thirty-four, forty-five, or fifty-seven years of age—a man must enter into a relationship with the living God. He must begin to take his cues, formulate his decisions, and accept his responsibilities from this eternal power source. In doing so, such a man becomes uniquely masculine.
- g. You can fail in many places as a parent, but you cannot afford to stumble at this point. "Love covers a multitude of sins," wrote the apostle Peter. How true this is of parenthood.

## **2. The "sexuality" crack.**

- a. There are few things as vulnerable, or as tender, as a person's sexuality—especially in the formative years. Many factors shape a child's sexual identity: childhood experiences, cultural standards, education, and the media. But as powerful as each of these factors may be, nothing exerts as much influence on a child's sexual identity as mom and dad.
- b. During childhood, the homosexual, whether a man or a woman, has often suffered some form of deficit in the relationship with the parent of the same sex. Damaged,

rejected, and traumatized, many homosexuals then seek to repair their lost childhood through homosexual activity.

- c. The greatest safeguard against the sexuality crack is parental consistency—consistency in behavior, consistency in discipline, consistency in fulfilling the parental roles mandated by Scripture. Dr. Irving Bieber writes: “We have come to the conclusion that a constructive, supportive, warmly related father precludes the possibility of a homosexual man.”

### 3. The “trust” crack.

- a. Parent-child relationships, especially during the first six to ten years, provide the working model for all subsequent relationships in a child’s life. And a critical component of the parent-child relationship is trust. Trust in a parent breeds security and confidence; it fosters emotional stability and defines ethical boundaries. But when trust is broken or violated, a child is injured at the core of his or her being.
- b. Charles Dickens recognized the significance of trust in a child’s life when he wrote in *Great Expectations*, “In the little world in which children have their existence...there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt, as injustice.” Trust can be broken in a variety of ways: through favoritism, cruelty, broken promises, and manipulation. Children are quick to detect the subtle, and overt, violations of this most precious commodity—trust.
- c. The fact is, women who don’t trust their dads growing up find it very difficult to trust their husbands in marriage. Our parental histories sail us from the unsafe (or

safe) harbor of childhood into the rough and stormy (or smooth) seas of adulthood.

4. The “affirmation” crack.

- a. The importance of affirmation is illustrated most forcefully in the life of our Lord. In Matthew 3, Jesus Christ is poised to begin His earthly ministry. Jesus is baptized by John, an act of obedience which inaugurates the final three years of His earthly life. As Christ emerges from the water, the Spirit of God descends upon Him, “and behold, a voice [spoke] out of the heavens, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased’” (Matthew 3:17).
- b. What is the significance of this verse? Even though Jesus Christ was God in the flesh, He was nevertheless a man. Like you and me, Jesus was a human being who needed to be affirmed in His manhood, His character, and His mission. Every child—son or daughter—needs the blessing of parents.

## REMEDIES FROM THE HEART

If you are a parent who has hurt your children, a parent who failed to love and to discipline, a parent who was inconsistent even indifferent, don’t deny your guilt. Begin right now by confessing all of your sins and failures to a gracious God. Claim the promise of 1 John 1:9, which reads, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Bring your sins one by one to the cross; allow the blood of Christ to wash each one away.

Once you’ve done this, meet with your adult child (even if you have to travel across the country to do so) and ask him or her to forgive you. Pursue reconciliation with uncompromising

passion; don't rest until you've done everything in your power to make it right. And from this point on, commit yourself to being the parent God desires for you to be.

Others of you may have been on the receiving end of parental abuse. You know the pain of love never given; discipline withheld, and needs ignored. One or all of the "cracks" we've examined have penetrated your life.

**The challenge before you is to FORGIVE.**

Many adult children exact revenge on parents by holding their sins and failures over the offending parent's head. The abuses of the past are replayed over and over again in the child's mind; they are hinted at in conversations with mom or dad. These injustices then define the parameters of the parent-child relationship.

But, until forgiveness is granted (whether it's asked for or not), the adult child remains a prisoner of the past, trapped in a victim mentality that prohibits real growth and maturity. Forgiveness is the inaugural declaration that I am a "change agent," not a "helpless victim," and that I am going to make choices to heal the wounds of my past.

## Question and Answer Period

### Workshop Training Session I: *Sexual Sin and its Beginnings*

One of the most riveting questions that was asked during the workshop's Question and Answer period was: "What safeguards are there for the Christian against executing premature judgments and bias assumptions toward homosexuals?" To help answer this question, the researcher pulled from a variety of scholarly sources, most of which had a theological perspective and instructed accordingly:

The verdict-based approach to information gathering and decision making creates a confirming-evidence bias. This bias leads people to seek out information that supports their existing instincts or points of view while avoiding information that fails to support their beliefs. The confirming-evidence bias not only affects where we go to collect evidence but also how we interpret the evidence we do receive, leading us to give too much weight to supporting information and too little to conflicting information, and even preventing us from searching out information that might challenge our beliefs. It is important to the decision process to seek out a range of information and to avoid premature judgments that will cut short the information search process when useful information for the decision process is still available. That is why it is a good idea [for example] to ask people to write down some ideas before coming to a meeting where a key issue is to be discussed and thus avoid being prematurely influenced by those at the meeting.<sup>2</sup>

Another perspective on the topic of premature judgments and preconceived notions can be found in Eileen Gambrill's book: *Social Work Practice: A Critical Thinker's Guide* as she writes:

Preconceptions can lead to incorrect inferences when a theory  
 (1) is held on poor grounds (there is not adequate reason to believe it is relevant);  
 (2) is used unconsciously; or  
 (3) it preempts examination of the data.

We may hold theories that have not been critically tested as dearly as theories that have been critically tested and found to help clients attain outcomes they value. We may be unaware of preconceptions that influence our decisions. We may not critically evaluate the accuracy of our beliefs. The more ambiguous the data, the more preconception influence assumptions. Much of our understanding of the world is theory based rather than data based; our interpretations are inferences based on guesses about what may be true. Unwarranted confidence in a theory increases chances of incorrect views of concerns. Overconfidence in a theory increases the likelihood of incorrect views

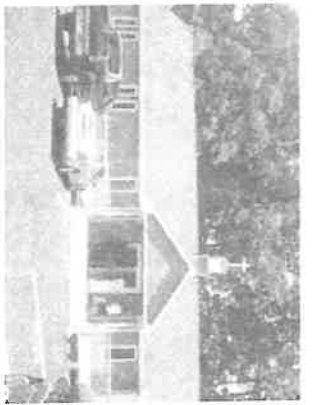
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<sup>2</sup>David Ahlstrom and Garry D. Bruton, *International Management: Strategy and Culture in the Emerging World* (Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2010), 271.

of problems. We are particularly likely to be overconfident of our judgments about people. Only if we critically examine our assumptions may we identify flaws in our thinking and discover better options.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Eileen D. Gambrill. *Social Work Practice: A Critical Thinker's Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 206.



## Join Us for our Weekly Services:

Prayer & Meditation:

Tuesday  
7-8 pm

Bible Study:

Wednesday  
7:30-8:30pm

Morning Worship:

Sunday  
11am-1pm

- Dynamic people
- God-Centered environment
- Exciting location
- Excellent Ministries
- Innovative Leadership
- Opportunity for individual growth and spiritual advancement

*We Forgive, because We are Forgiven!*

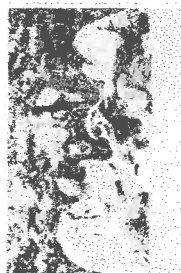
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## True Vine Baptist Church

Celebrating God's  
People:  
*We Forgive, because  
We are Forgiven*





- For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).
- The bible explains that humanity fell from the original condition of moral purity into the state of sin [see Genesis 3: 1-24]
- God's salvation always renews the spirit of a person to lead a life that is morally pleasing to him.
- Salvation is the restoration of a right relationship with God. One of the effects of sin is separation from God.
- The bible makes it clear that salvation restores one's relationship with God.
- *For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life* Romans 5:10.
- Salvation begins with the initiating love of God [also read: John 3:16]. God's eternal purpose is to save sinners through Jesus' atoning death on the cross.

### ASK YOURSELF: HOW DO I ASK FOR GOD'S LOVE?

- Romans 10:9: That if thou shalt confess (ask) with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
- Romans 10:10 (Purpose of confessing with the mouth and believing in your heart) for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Acts 16:30, 31
- What must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. (Open the door of your heart to Jesus). Rev. 3:20: Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him and he with me.
- Once a person asks Jesus to come into their heart and life, He comes in. Rev. 3:30: ...I will come into him (or her); Romans 10:13: For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.



- The call to repentance is a call to absolute surrender to the purposes of God and to live in this awareness. This turning to God and trusting in His will is required of all people. Luke 13:3 and Matthew 11:20.
- The emphasis on the total life change was one of the main reasons Jesus died on the cross for our sins. Luke 5:32. Jesus states that I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
- Repentance can be said to have occurred when someone has been convicted of the reality of their personal sinfulness, and then rejects and renounces that life of sin, and turns to God through faith in Jesus Christ. The experience of repentance precedes salvation: II Peter 3:9.

Christian love is giving to others those things that you would want them to give you if you were in their situation—and it's doing so even if they can't pay you back. In fact, it's doing so especially if they can't pay you back! Christian love is respect for others. It's mercy. It's charity.



## **APPENDIX F**

### **WEEK SIX: *FORGIVENESS AND HEALING PART I***

**WORKSHOP TRAINING SESSION II, QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD, AND**

**EVANGELISM BROCHURE EXERCISE 1**

## Workshop Training Session II: *Forgiveness and Healing Part 1*

Tuesday, June 14, 2011, 6-7pm

### Healing Must Take Place

Of course, God could eliminate all traces of homosexual desire, if he so willed. But, ordinarily, God gives us graces to bring our emotional life into some degree of stability. It is important that the over comer tries to find means to cope with emotional difficulties; otherwise, emotional pain may cause him to act out homosexually. This effort to change internally must be in conjunction with efforts to change externally. The author suggests several personal changes.

These include:

- wearing gender-appropriate clothing,
- getting rid of all pornographic materials, and
- learning one's "triggers" and "setups".

A **trigger** is anything which directly stimulates sexual excitement or arousal. Erotic books, videos, music, TV programs, the use of alcohol or drugs, provocative clothing and the like, are all triggers. The author refers to vacation times, loss of a friend, and changing jobs as examples of **triggers**, which he describes as the people, events or circumstances which provoke the

**emotional complex**, that wounded area of emotions and defenses which is at the root of

**triggers** and **setups** occur together, it is almost inevitable that the homosexual will be severely tempted to seek out some homosexually related avenue of relief and release...Learning how to tolerate and process your wounded emotions and defenses is at the very heart of healing homosexuality.

Among the relational changes suggested are chaste same-sex friendships, breaking emotionally dependent relationships, and participation in a spiritual support group that deals with

homosexual difficulties. In all these matters the counselor should be an alert coach of the overcomer.

The process of healing as involving pain, as the author's chapter title suggests: when "it begins to hurt; you Begin to Heal." The overcomer must be in touch with his/her emotions, because homosexuality has very little to do with sex:

The sexual involvement with another same-sex person is a symptom; a result; a compromise for the need to be accepted and loved. Healing is emotional work. It is to experience anew as an adult the closeness and oneness, which was not given from the first father-male in a child's life. It is the healing of that emotional complex of feelings which was left wounded and sensitive from earliest childhood.

Using the theory of conflicts between inner child and inner parent, Consiglio suggests a series of exercises that will bring about healing. He reminds the overcomer that there is another and stronger part of his personality and this is his inner adult, which is the voice of his personality, and which is meant to take greater control and direction over his personality. "Your inner adult is the mature and Spirit-led voice of Christ in you."

It is through the Holy Spirit working in us that we can be healed of our wounded emotions. Through our inner adult voice God will heal the conflict between the inner parent and the inner child. The homosexual man will begin to accept him/herself as a person, no longer needing to look to other men for sexual-genital gratification.

It is the voice of the inner adult, led by the Spirit that leads to inner healing. This voice prevents the old familiar complex of painful feelings from overwhelming him/her and opening the door for homosexual acting out. Consiglio goes on to demonstrate how he uses positive

transference in his therapy work, allowing, for example, a close and emotionally positive transference to take place with his male clients.

When this is openly discussed and worked through, the male client is able to experience a loving relationship with a male that is nonsexual and a powerful source of healing. The overcomer begins acting with the therapist as he would with a good and nurturing parent. This is a powerful and therapeutic transference. It gives the overcomer the opportunity to relive his past anxieties in a trusting relationship, with the result that the underlying wounds, such as distrust, dependency, anger, and the like, begin to lose their grip. The overcomer begins to realize that someone really cares for him. Experiencing love is the heart of this therapy, for God is love (1 John 4:8) and this is God-led therapy.<sup>1</sup>

### **God as Love**

God is self-revealed as love. God's love for humanity or Israel is not mentioned explicitly in the Old Testament before Hosea, but it is the clear implication of God's election, deliverance, covenant, and providential care of Israel. It is described explicitly in Hosea on the analogy of parental and marital love (Hos. 2:19; 11:1; 14:4). God's love of Israel is not based on Israel's worthiness but on the divine free decision (Deut. 7:7).

God's self-revelation as loving comes to its fullness in the New Testament testimony, in which the central message is that God's love is manifest in Christ (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16; 1 John 4:7). This testimony reaches its culmination in 1 John 4:8, 16 in the assertion that "God is love." In context this is not the ascription of an abstract quality to God, but rather the definition of God in terms of the characteristic divine activity. Beyond this it means that all God's actions are the manifestations of the divine love. God's love is the spontaneous, outgoing, total concern for the

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<sup>1</sup>John Francis Harvey, *The Truth About Homosexuality: The cry of the Faithful* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1996), 102-106.

well-being of the creation, and especially for humanity—a love manifest in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Spirit. The order or pattern of the relations of Father, Son, and Spirit constitutes the basis of this outgoing love. Familiarity with the idea of God’s love makes it easy to forget its uniqueness. God’s revelation of the divine love for the world is “what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived” (1 Cor. 2:9).

God’s love as manifest in Christ is the final definition of the moral goodness demanded by God. It is the fundamental pattern for the Christian life, in that Christians are called to imitate the love of God in Christ (John 13:34).<sup>2</sup>

### **Restore the erring brother/sister**

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one...” (Gal. 6:1).

Too frequently when discipline has been exercised by a church, the attitude has been, “Well, that’s that,” as though the final chapter had been written by the removal of the disobedient. This was not Paul’s viewpoint as he wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:6-8: “sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.”

We do not punish our children to get even with them, but to correct them. So ought the church to judge sin with the humble, earnest prayer that God will grant repentance and restore the soul to His fellowship and to ours.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology: Third Edition* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 100.

<sup>3</sup>Paul R. Jackson, *The Doctrine and Administration of the Church* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1968), 72-73.

## Question and Answer Period

### Workshop Training Session II: *Forgiveness and Healing Part 1*

One of the most passionate topics that were brought about during this portion of the workshop was birthed out of a question from a context group participant who asked: “What things can a heterosexual person do to help a homosexual person while on their road to healing and change?” This thoughtful question became the center for much discussion, and caused the researcher to go back and pull information to help steer the context into the direction of biblical truth. The researcher was able to quote from Paul Flaman’s book, *Homosexuality and Following Jesus*<sup>4</sup> to help answer this question:

#### **Responding to the Needs of Others**

When Jesus is asked, “And who is my neighbor?” in response to his command to “love your neighbor as yourself,” he tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. Given that Jesus was speaking to a Jewish audience, it is very interesting that his model of neighborliness is this man from a people who were at enmity with the Jews. Nevertheless, he provided for the needs of a man from Jerusalem (most likely a Jew) left half dead by robbers (Luke 10:25-37). His parable of the last judgment also strongly calls us to respond properly and concretely to the real needs of people, including those we may consider “least,” with genuine love. According to Jesus, those who do not respond to people’s needs will experience “eternal punishment,” but those who do, the “righteous,” will experience “eternal life.” The implication for those who follow Jesus is that we are all called to treat all people, whatever their sexual inclinations and whether or not they behave in ways we approve, as “persons,” and to respect their dignity as children of God, as brothers and sisters of Jesus. We all have the same basic human needs to survive and be fulfilled. If our needs for genuine respect, to be loved and to love, for friendship and affection, and so

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<sup>4</sup>Paul Flaman, *Homosexuality and Following Jesus* (New York: BPS Books, 2011).

forth, are not met through healthy relationships, we may seek to meet these needs through unhealthy relationships, perhaps even through anti-Christian subcultures.

The command to love your neighbor “as yourself” finds a parallel in the Golden Rule of Jesus: “So always treat others as you would like them to treat you” (Mt 7:12). If applied thoughtfully, these sayings of Jesus can promote much more care, sensitivity, understanding, and respect. Concerning homosexuality, for example, “conservative” or “traditional” Christians often need to learn how to treat “liberal” Christians and those who identify themselves as “gays” and “lesbians” as they would like to be treated if they were in their shoes.

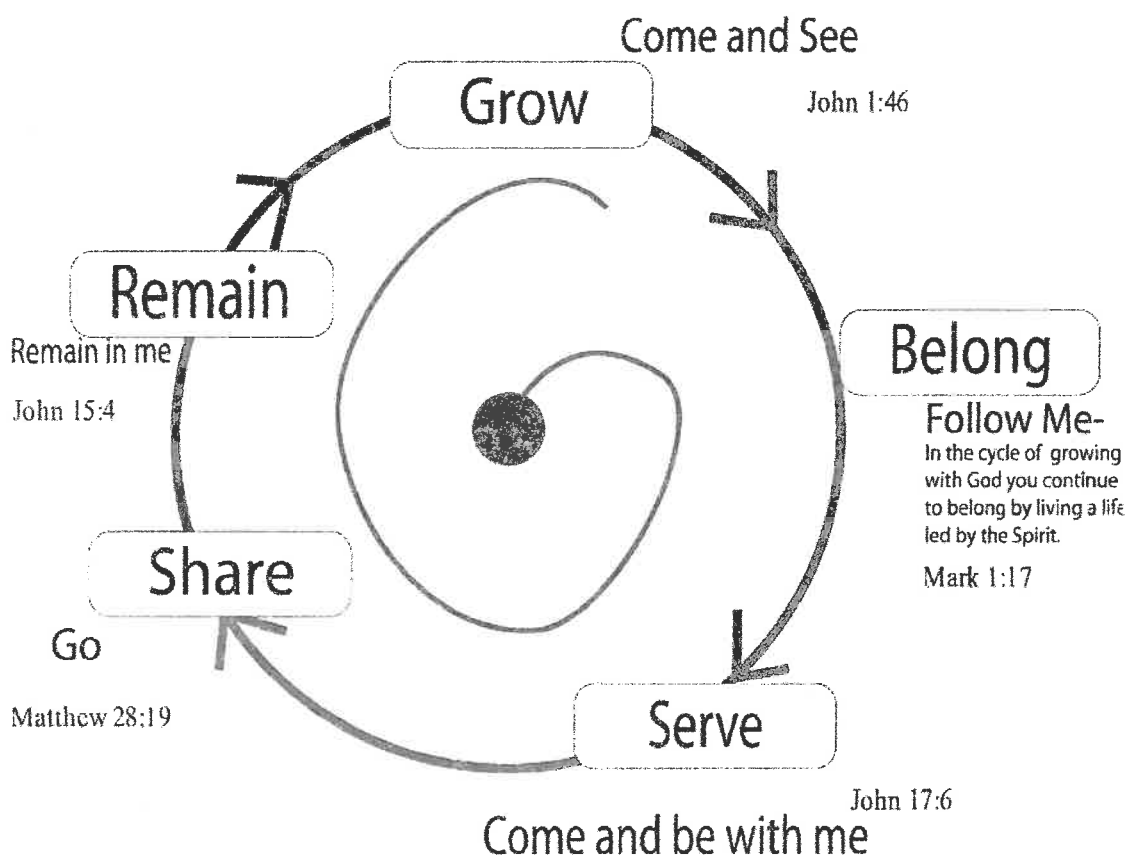
“Gays” and “lesbians” and “liberal” Christians, meanwhile, need to learn how to show the same kind of understanding and respect for “conservative” or “traditional” Christians and those who identify themselves as “ex-gay” and “ex-lesbians.” Putting these teachings of Jesus into practice would go a long way toward promoting empathy and mutual understanding, and to overcoming hurt feelings and divisions on the matter of homosexuality.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 3-5.

## DISCIPLESHIP

**Christian discipleship is a concept that was born when Jesus Christ hand-selected His first followers. A disciple, by definition, is a convinced adherent of a school or individual.** In the case of Jesus, His disciples were those who followed Him while He was on earth, as well as those who continue to follow He and His teachings today.

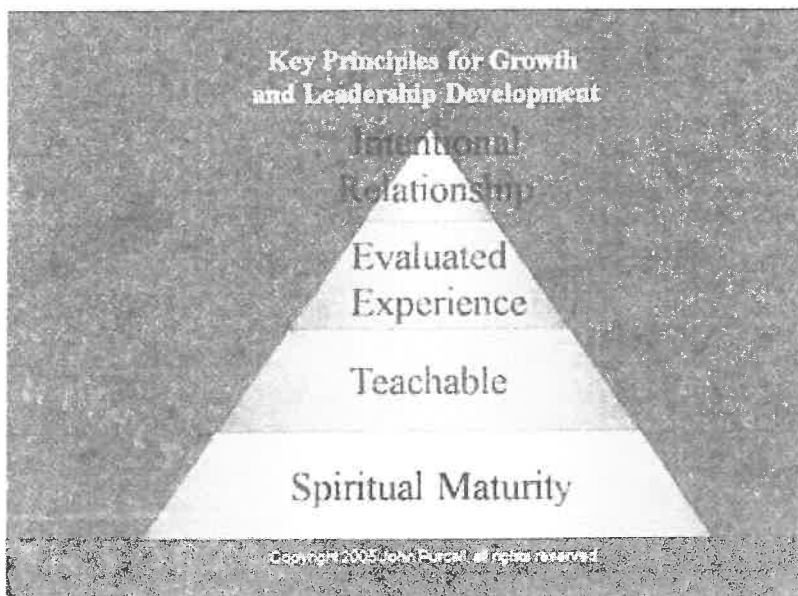


True discipleship takes all of Christ's teaching and implements them into our lives in such a way that we live like Christ did. We must not be content with only the passing on of knowledge and tradition and assume the accompanying of conviction and belief. We are called to live out a godly life before those we instruct, just as Christ did. There is a great difference between the modern student and a disciple. Discipleship is a lifestyle.

We are Christ's disciples and this Christian life calls us to learn and live like Him. This will require significant changes in the way we think and live. Christ wants to teach us in each aspect of our lives from our parenting skills to handling finances. This differs from some cults which will actually make your decisions for you! Mentoring is a term that describes the training of a person in one or more specific areas.

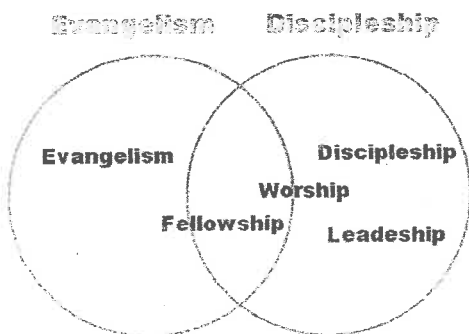


- Discipleship is a process that should be occurring all through our lives. A disciple always follows his master's life: once a disciple, always a disciple.
- Every Believer should be equipped for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12).
- God has given every believer natural and spiritual gifts. These gifts, when combined and exercised in concert with the members of the church, serve to accomplish the work of a Disciple. Every true believer should view themselves as Disciples of Christ.
- The discipleship path takes people on an adventure from their first encounter with God to living life as mature Christians who fulfill their God-given destiny.



## EVANGELISM

**“The Harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Luke 10:2). Each believer has been commissioned to spread the Good News of Jesus’ coming, death, burial, and resurrection.**



### Christian Evangelism-Fulfilling the Great Commission

Christian evangelism is summed up in the Great Commission. After the resurrection and before He ascended into heaven, Jesus appeared one last time to His disciples (they were eleven in number at that time, since Judas Iscariot had betrayed Jesus and hanged himself). This is the moment that He delivered the famous calling for disciples known as The Great Commission:

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of*

*the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. —Matthew 28:18-20.*

Christian discipleship continued to grow then the followers of Jesus gathered in Jerusalem and Peter outlined criteria for selecting a twelfth disciple to replace Judas Iscariot. The Scripture says they drew lots and the lot fell to Matthias. These men, who had previously been disciples, or followers of Jesus, were now to become apostles and evangelists, or messengers. Their intention was to spread the Word, and

beginning with Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came and indwelt them for the first time (See Acts 1 and 2).



Jesus told his followers to preach the Gospel to people all over the world. Below are some Bible verses that can help us understand the need for evangelism, as well as help us in carrying out the responsibility and privilege of telling people about Jesus Christ:

- *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. —Matthew 28:18-20.*
- *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. —Mark 16:15-16*
- *And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. —Luke 24:47*
- *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. —John 3:17*

Each of the verses above tell us that we are not limited as to who we can evangelize to. In Matthew 28:19 and Luke 24:47, for example, there are references to “all nations.” In Mark 16:15-16, Jesus’ followers are told to evangelize to “all creation.” And, John 3:17 mentions the word “world” on three occasions. The four Gospels are unanimous: We can and should evangelize to everyone, everywhere.

## **APPENDIX G**

WEEK SEVEN: *FORGIVENESS AND HEALING PART 2*

WORKSHOP TRAINING SESSION III, QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD, AND  
POST-TESTING EVALUATION

## Workshop Training Session III: *Forgiveness and Healing Part 2*

**Tuesday, June 21, 2011, 6-7pm**

### **Helping Heterosexuality Take Root**

Once a changing homosexual has made significant strides in healing feelings of rejection, ending reinforcing behaviors, healing feelings of inadequacy, controlling your mind and ending defensive detachment, they will need to start thinking about heterosexuality. They will notice that when they begin filling their needs and healing old wounds, that their homosexual compulsions will slowly subside. However, they are still human and will still have sexual urges. These urges will always be seeking an outlet. Dr. William Consiglio makes an interesting analogy with sexuality, comparing it to a stream of water:

There is only one stream of sexuality as God designed it. That stream is a heterosexual stream. Picture a child somewhere between age five through eleven standing in that stream of heterosexuality. At this preadolescent time of human sexual development, picture the cool waters of sexuality flowing gently by at about the height of his ankles. In this period of childhood, sexuality is cool (i.e., not very pleasurable); it flows gently (i.e., not very powerful); and it is only at ankle height (i.e., not very pervasive). But now picture the adolescent, age twelve through nineteen. In adolescence the stream of sexuality has become a hot (i.e., very pleasurable), and very rapid (i.e., very powerful) river which is at the height of his chin (i.e., very pervasive). For the rest of adulthood sexuality is a very power pervasive, and pleasurable force in a person's life. If the stream of human heterosexuality is blocked in childhood or adolescence, it will likely form other streams (deviations or disorientations) off of the mainstream...It will find some form of expression.

It takes time for the stream to regain its momentum into heterosexual direction. The shift in orientation that can be experienced is a gradual one. As homosexual tendencies diminish, heterosexual ones will slowly emerge. If a person has been doing significant healing, and homosexual feelings are diminishing, it won't hurt them to start fostering heterosexual feelings.

It's helpful to give the new orientation a nudge in the right direction. The sexual feelings are the same, only the object of desire is shifting.<sup>1</sup>

### **Effort**

Effort will be the impetus for your healing and shift in orientation. Some men vacillate for years in their decision to engage the reparative process. These would be years wasted. This process of change is not easy, but very satisfying. You may need to fast and pray for the desire to change. The Lord cannot do it for you. You've got to be willing to set goals and face fears. You'll have to be task oriented in achieving heterosexuality. Change requires effort. However, you will plant the seeds of heterosexuality if you exert your energies to action. Dr. William Consiglio said:

Change is hard. No one likes to change. We all like to maintain the status quo. We all resist change. It is easier to remain with what is painfully familiar, than to engage in unknown change. The momentum is to keep letting the weak seeds sprout and grow it takes effort to plant the corn seeds of healing, water them, till the soil, pull out weeds, and cultivate the plants. In due season, however, your overcomer will reap the harvest, if he engages in the daily self-therapy that heals.<sup>2</sup>

### **Encouragement**

The saints need encouragement. A Biblical example is set by the apostle Paul because in most of his letters he opens with commendations and praise when it can be sincerely given. To the Romans, it was rejoicing in their faith (1:8); to the Corinthians, it was praise to the Lord for the grace, gifts and knowledge bestowed on them (1 Cor. 1:4-7); to the Galatians in serious

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<sup>1</sup>Scott Andersen, and Kae Andersen, *Homosexuality: Symptoms and Free Agency* (Springville, UT: Bonneville Books, 1998), 83.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 89.

doctrinal error, he gave no commendation; but to the Ephesians he wrote encouragingly of their “faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints” (1:15).

The Lord Jesus found opportunity to commend something in each of the seven churches except Laodicea (Rev. 2, 3).

Flattery is unworthy; but many a weary, discouraged heart has taken new hope and strength from honest commendation. “...A word spoken in due season, how good is it!” (Prov. 15:23). Such attitudes on the part of brethren to each other, from the pastor to his people or from the people to their pastor can transform the spirit of an entire congregation. There are times when reproof must be given, but let us be gracious and encourage one another more frequently!<sup>3</sup>

### **The Congregations Response to Homosexuality**

As one homosexual believer wrote to a preacher: “Anyone who joins a [church: faith community] should know what it is a place of transformation, of discipline, or learning, and not merely a place to be comforted or indulged.” Because [the church] is a community of discipleship, the church in turn has a responsibility both to nurture and also to admonish and discipline the wayward in its midst, including those who are not living in sexual chastity, whatever the exact nature of the unchaste behavior may be.

But what form should this nurturing and disciplining responsibility take in the case of homosexual persons? Here Christians differ. At one end of the spectrum of opinion are those who argue that the focus of the Church’s ministry ought to be that of fostering a transformation in the sexual orientation of homosexual persons in its midst. Others advocate a diametrically

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<sup>3</sup>Paul R. Jackson. *The Doctrine and Administration of the Church* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1968), 80.

opposite approach. They see the church's task as assisting lesbians and gays to accept their homosexuality.<sup>4</sup>

We at True Vine Baptist Church will welcome, but not affirm homosexuals. We, like Jesus, will love the sinner, but hate the sin.

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<sup>4</sup>Stanley James Grenz, *Welcoming but not affirming: an evangelical response to homosexuality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 134.

## How to Evangelize

The idea of evangelizing people may sound intimidating, and for many people it can be. God gave some people bold, outgoing personalities and others shy, quiet ones. The idea behind evangelism and the point of this process is to help you discover what method of evangelism works for you together with the way God made you. Even if you are afraid, you just have to have the courage to. Courage is not the absence of fear, but it is doing what is right, even when you are scared.

1. **Pray before you evangelize.** Remember out there is a world of lost people and many who have never heard the Gospel, ask the Lord for guidance and re-read those key verses about the Gospel so that you may share it truthfully.
2. **Don't rush directly into the topic of witnessing when you are with someone.** Start with some small talk and ask them about what has been going on in their life lately. Don't expect that they would immediately trust you, it will take a while before they may open up to you.
3. **Pay attention to what they say.** It wouldn't be kind of you to think of the person you're witnessing to as just another evangelism opportunity, people like being listened to, show that you truly care for his or her salvation.
4. **Talk about the love of Jesus.** You can begin with explaining God's love for mankind is so pervasive that He gave His best for our worst. Speak the Word found in John 3:16: *For God So loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* The true Gospel is how God loved us so much that He sent His only son to die for us and take our place on the cross. Be sure to tell them that they **MUST** repent and place all their trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
5. **See if the person is receptive.** If the person seems receptive to the Gospel, ask if you may pray with them. Then proceed to invite them to worship with you and make sure to give them church literature.



6. **Talk about your testimony.** Tell the person about your testimony, and how God has changed your life.

### **The Church and Evangelism**

Evangelism is a primary responsibility of each church. The pastor must teach, challenge and lead the church in aggressive evangelism, even while he edifies the saints and equips them to serve the Lord. As Paul charged Timothy, "...Do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5). According to tradition, Timothy was then the pastor at Ephesus. Normally a church will manifest a burden for souls if the pastor shows genuine evangelistic zeal. Any church is in serious trouble whose pastor and people do not live with a conviction of the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

#### **Opportunities to Evangelize:**

1. The pulpit ministry is vital. "...It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). A pastor must teach as well as evangelize. Both ministries may be effectually woven into the same message. A ministry that is all teaching and no evangelism will produce a dead, formal church. A ministry that is all evangelism and no teaching will produce a church that is impotent and easily deceived because it is not built up in the faith. Even its evangelism will fail.
2. House-to-house visitation is hard work, but it pays eternal dividends. The Lord has taught us to go out into the highways and byways (Luke 14:23). It is reasonable to fish where the fish are, and to fish for men where the men are.

3. Tract distribution has been honored of the Lord. It usually supplements personal soul winning in other forms, but our sovereign God often speaks in power to hearts through literature without oral ministry.
4. Personal witnessing to neighbors, relatives and business and school associates is one of the most fruitful means of evangelizing people. Its basic weakness is the fact that too few Christians practice it! However, no matter how many of the above and other methods are used, a church is neglecting one of its greatest evangelistic opportunities if it fails to hold special evangelistic meetings. God has given to certain men the gift of evangelism. Such men should be sought by churches to work with the pastor and people in special times of concentrated effort to reach men for Christ. The other efforts throughout the year will be enhanced by such special meetings. Some churches have at least two such series of meetings annually. More churches plan one series.

### **Closing Thoughts:**

The busy schedules of our modern day have discouraged long evangelistic meetings. Formerly they extended for weeks, or indefinitely, until the Lord brought great conviction and many conversions. Now most of the meetings do not exceed two weeks. Frequently they are reduced to one week. This usually proves to be too short a time to accomplish any extensive or intensive work in the hearts of men. We urgently need such a burden upon our hearts to see men saved that we will put aside our own schedules and pleasures to accomplish more effective work for our Lord!<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jackson. *The Doctrine and Administration of the Church*, 89-90.

### Evangelism Brochure Treatment: Role-Play Script

Directions: Please feel free to use this script during the role-play exercises during the evangelism brochure portion of this study. This script should be used as a guide only, and the researcher fully supports any group member participant to customize their conversations to comfortably fit their personalities. Please allow each person in your group to play the role of the True Vine Member at least twice. Don't forget to have fun!

**True Vine Baptist Member:** Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ *(your name here)* \_\_\_\_\_. I'm not perfect, but I serve a perfect God! What's your name?

Non-Member: Discloses their name.

**True Vine Baptist Member:** It's nice to meet you \_\_\_\_\_ *(mention their name)* \_\_\_\_\_, may I give you a personal invitation to my church?

*As you are waiting for their response, please reveal the brochure to the potential member and point to the address portion on the back.*

Non-Member: Sure!

**True Vine Baptist Member:** Great! Well, here is the address to my church, and I would like to point out a few scriptures that have helped me in my personal walk with Jesus Christ.

*Before your brochure handoff, please open the pamphlet while you are speaking and point to a few scriptures that you personally identify with.*

**True Vine Baptist member:** Alright, \_\_\_\_\_ *(mention their name again)* \_\_\_\_\_, it was great meeting you, and I hope to see you at our next gathering!

*Don't forget to give them the brochure, and you're done!*

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